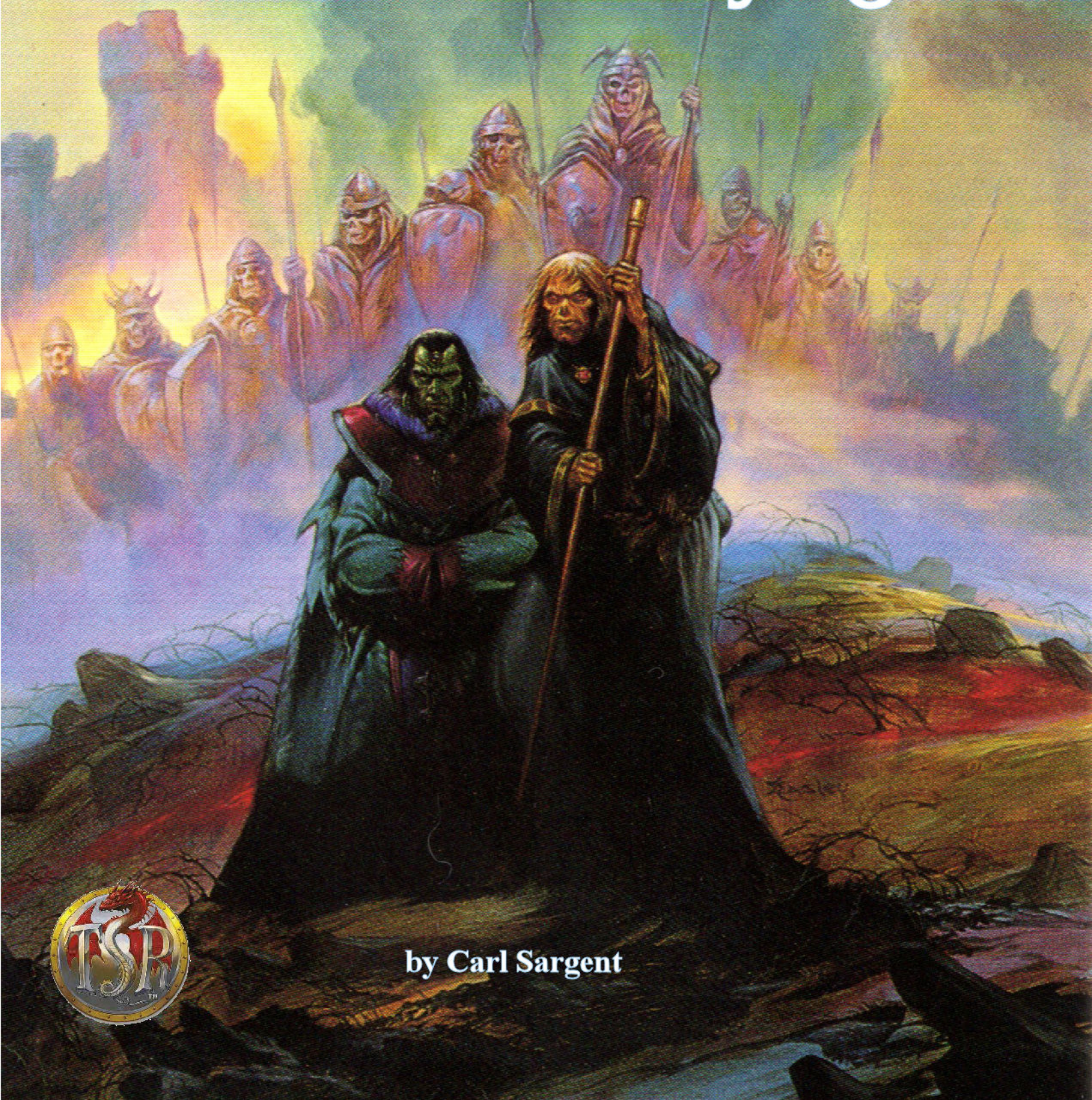


# GREYHAWK® adventures

## Ivid the Undying



by Carl Sargent





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by Carl Sargent

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# Introduction

The Great Kingdom is sundered, collapsed into chaos after the terrible Greyhawk Wars. An insane overking, advised by a malefic priesthood and conversing with fiends atop his malachite throne, slew and revived many of his local noble rulers as animuses, undead creatures of cold, hateful passions.

Great armies once the envy of the Flanaess wander the lands as freebooting mercenaries and pillagers, stripping the once-abundant treasures of this great nation. More than 300 years of slow degeneration and decline have climaxed in an appalling tragedy. Hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children have perished, and many more will follow in the years ahead.

In this merciless nightmare of insanity and cruelty, only a few pockets of resistance fighters, good and valiant rebels, can be found. Made up of rangers, druids, bards, and woodsmen of the great forests of Aerdy and the Lone Heath, they struggle against the growing evil and oppression.

*Ivid The Undying* is an extensive guidebook to the Great Kingdom and its many lands, expanding on the information presented in *From The Ashes*. The first chapter summarizes the history of the Great Kingdom of Aerdy. The following chapter details its peoples and rulers, laws,

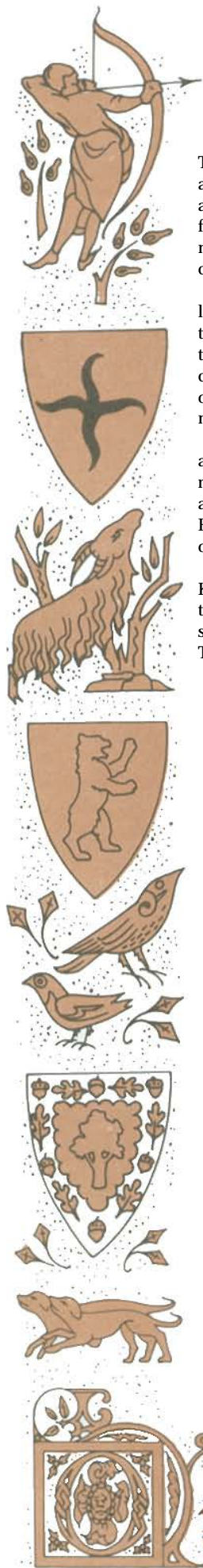
royal houses, merchants and peasants, powerful factions (armies, mercenaries, humanoids, fiends, and others), commerce, trade, and more.

Following these chapters are a number of gazetteer-style sections that describe the fiefdoms within the Great Kingdom. Cities, towns, settlements, mysterious and magical sites, castles, keeps, ruins, natural hazards and many other features are covered, along with profiles and descriptions of major NPCs of the lands. These chapters take up the bulk of *Ivid The Undying* and provide DMs with all the information needed for campaigning in the Great Kingdom.

The chapter, **Whispers and Ventures**, contains rumors, adventure hooks, hints and allusions, suggestions for game masters, and mini-scenario themes for PCs of all levels of experience so the richness of the Great Kingdom as a campaign setting can be fully exploited.

The final chapter lists the major armies of Aerdy and mercenary companies of note.

From the ghastly fiendish magics of Duke Szeffrin's Almorian Lands in the west, to the barbarian-haunted islands and treasures of the Sea Barons to the east, the Great Kingdom awaits!



# The Millenium Empire

The current year is 585 CY (Common Year). It is more than 2,000 years since the original inhabitants of the Flanaess, the Flan tribes, were driven from their lands by Oeridian and Suloise invaders fleeing magical cataclysms far to the west.

Only much later, some 700-800 years ago, the strongest of the Oeridian tribes, the Aerdi, settled the rich lands to the east of the Nyr Dyv and founded the Kingdom of Aerdy. A century and more of growth saw the Great Kingdom expand, with the Flan driven north and the Suloise driven south to the margins of the Densac Gulf. At its height, the kingdom stretched from the lands of the Sea Barons to the borders of modern Perrenland, and from Sunndi to the south to the forbidding Griff-Corusk mountains in the north.

The Aerdy calendar dates from the crowning of the first overking, Nasran of the House of Cranden, in Rauxes in CY 1. Proclaiming universal peace, Nasran saw defeated Suloise and Flan—rebellious humanoid rabbles of no consequence and no threat to the vast might of Aerdy.

The high history of the Aerdi people is a tale very long in the telling. Hundreds of warriors, mages, seers, and others are much more than footnotes to that history. Aerdi history before the founding of the Great Kingdom is a rich, fabulous tapestry; and the lands the Aerdi came upon were hardly bereft of legends, wonders, and luminaries of their own. Those histories, however, would fill books on their own. So it is the Great Kingdom's own history we consider here.

The ruling house of Aerdy became the Rax-Nyrond House after the death of Nasran's grandson, Tenmeris, in CY 75. Tenmeris's Queen, Yalranda, was a formidable diplomat and mediator who had done much to support her husband and was the true power behind the throne. Tenmeris, it was said, had a brain as small as his flatulent belly was vast.

Yalranda was accepted as the only overqueen in Aerdy history because of her prowess in establishing dynastic marriages between the royal houses of Aerdy and her uncanny gift for forging alliances (and because of her strange, magical allure and ability to calm angry or confused nobles). That she died young, at age 40, is one of Aerdy's great tragedies.

Her eldest son, Manshen, broke with tradition and took the name of the Rax-Nyrond Royal House. This house was to rule for nearly 400 years. (Aerdi Royal marriages involved the lesser party taking the familial name of the more elevated partner of the marriage, so that any spouse of the Crandens normally became a Cranden.)

## A Long, Slow Fall

The subsequent inexorable decline of the Great Kingdom can be seen in two stages. The first is the beginning of the many secessions from the Overkingdom, with Furyondy

the first to establish independence in CY 254 and Veluna and Tenh following soon after with Perrenland re-asserting its independence. The decisive blow was the division of this royal house in CY 356 when the Nyrond branch rebelled.

The attempts of the then-overking, Portillan, to reconquer Nyrond were stymied by an assault on the North Province of Aerdy from Flan barbarians which forced Portillan to defend his own lands rather than reconquer Nyrond. With the Urnst states and the Theocracy of the Pale swiftly following Nyrond's path, Aerdy's dominance was broken.

While further secessions would follow, such as Almorian independence and a relatively short-lived attempt to ally the South Province with the Iron League, these would not be of major importance.

However, the second element of the Great Kingdom's decline now came to the fore. While some overkings had been less than masters of warfare or diplomacy, the House of Rax produced a succession of inept rulers. Galren, Portillan's son, was a half-wit. In turn, Galren's son and heir, Sonnend, was a drunkard who left all affairs of state to his advisers. Further ineffectual and weak rulers followed their dismal reigns. Some were said to be insane, but this was mostly untrue—save for feeble-mindedness now and again.

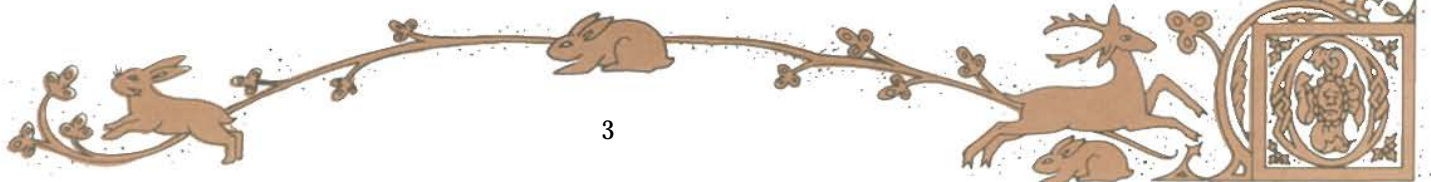
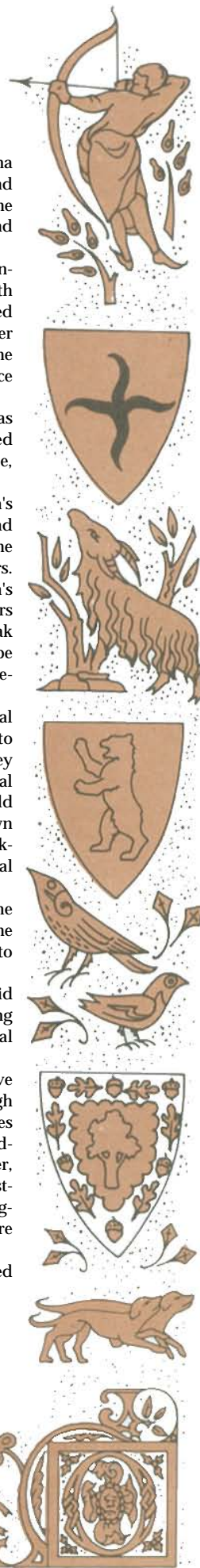
This produced a vital change in Aerdi society. Local rulers who were members of other royal houses began to use their titles of prince rather more aggressively. They began to enact more laws of their own, to administer local taxes increasingly independently of the overking, to build fortifications not only for themselves but for their own liegemen who came less and less to answer to the overking and more and more to obey only their own local lords.

Mercenary armies became more common, and some princes conquered slices of other princes' lands. The drunken, enfeebled, or effete overkings allowed this to happen.

The House of Naelax was the first to use humanoid mercenary troops around the Adri Forest for provisioning raids late in the fourth century. And it was this royal house which came increasingly to the fore.

At this time, the Great Kingdom still had a relative freedom and equality of many priesthoods, although those of Lawful alignments were dominant. In Rauxes itself, the priesthood of Pholtus still played a commanding role as advisers, judges, and mediators. However, Naelax aligned itself firmly with the burgeoning priesthood of Hextor. In a land with increasing strife and struggle, this aggressive evil priesthood became more influential as the decades passed.

Before many years went by, Prince Ivid of Naelax acted decisively to oust the wretched Rax ruler.





# The Millenium Empire

## The Turmoil Between Crowns

This name is given both to the decade of internal schisms under the rule of the last Rax overking, and to the civil war which followed Ivid's ascension.

Overking Nalif was the last of the Rax line descended directly from the overkings. A flock of misbegotten cousins, exiles and ne'er-do-wells of Rax could lay some claim to the title of overking when Ivid had Nalif assassinated, but after a century of hopelessly ineffectual Rax rule all of the royal houses agreed that another Rax overking was simply unacceptable.

Ivid proclaimed himself overking immediately (in 446 CY) and plunged the Great Kingdom into civil war.

With few exceptions, no simple picture of the role of royal houses in the civil war can be given (the houses are detailed in the next chapter). Most of the House of Naelax allied with Prince Ivid. But a few of his cousins—who disliked and distrusted him—did not.

Among the competing houses, the House of Cranden opposed Naelax, as did many elements of the House of Garasteth and the remnants of Rax. But in all houses princes were busy using the civil war as a cover for settling old scores and attacking their in-house rivals. Ivid certainly had some such princes assassinated; the blame would be laid upon their own blood for this, increasing within-house divisions and making opposition to him less organized.

Alliances shifted during the war, but the decisive event was the decree of the House of Darmen in CY 449 to back Ivid's suit wholeheartedly. This wealthy and pragmatic house believed Ivid was coming out ahead, so the house sprang a surprise with the sack of Rel Deven in Harvester of that year and a series of brilliant lightning strikes aimed at securing provisioning for the coming winter.

Their armies allied with those of Naelax to secure the central lands of the Great Kingdom, and the war was won. In Planting, CY 450, all houses agreed to accept Ivid as overking, and their leading princes paid homage along the Great Way in the Parade of Crowns. The House of Naelax was triumphant.

## Ivid's Legacy

Ivid may have won a kingdom, but he paid a high price. The South and North Provinces, and Medegia, became in effect semi-autonomous provinces of the Great Kingdom.

Ivid had to accept this as part of the bargain for accepting his ascension to the throne. While North Province was ruled by the House of Naelax, Medegia in particular became increasingly independent and often failed to support the more aggressive schemes of later overkings. But the independence of these sub-states could only delay the final fate of the Aerdi.

The House of Naelax changed Aerdy forever. The five

overkings it produced, and most of its noblemen and women, were dangerously insane and "fiend-seeing." Dangerously insane because the typically paranoid form their madness took did not take any toll of their intellect; they were usually smart, piercingly observant, especially with fiendish aid, and utterly ruthless.

The title "fiend-seeing" ascribed so often to them is, nowadays, not such an unusual aspect of Aerdi. Many rulers traffic with fiends, have fiends in their armies, or are themselves undead. However, at the time, the House of Naelax assumed dominance by being very unusual and pre-eminent in such fell dealings, and it gave them a decisive edge.

Ivid V ascended to the Malachite Throne in Rauxes in CY 556 by the traditional manner of murdering his father and others who got in his way. This was accepted practice in many royal houses in Aerdi. The moral degeneracy which the House of Naelax actively encouraged had taken a firm rooting in Aerdi aristocracy.

Ivid was no military genius, but he was a brilliant intriguer and politician, and he knew how to stage a good public execution or, still better, utilize torture to encourage any possible rivals to re-think their plans to oust him. The Screaming Column in Rauxes is one of the most colorful testimonies to Ivid V's innovation in the realm of cowering opposition by fear.

Had he remained content with such masterful acts within his own lands—for Ivid successfully ensured that his kingdom remained intact despite bids for secession by certain provinces—he might have been a highly effective ruler. As it happened, his megalomania got the better of him.

## The Beginning of the End

The first major naval skirmishes between the Great Kingdom and the powerful Nyronese navy took place in Relmor Bay in CY 578. Some say the Nyronese engineered these skirmishes, preparing for what they considered to be an inevitable war.

Certainly, Ivid V was making noises at court about reclaiming Aerdy's great imperial heritage, and Nyron was the first major power heading west.

To be sure, the ruler of South Province coveted Onnwal and Irongate, even Idee—but these were small worries to Ivid.

He did have designs on Nyron, but it may well be that the Nyronese forced his hand. Both sides actually shied away from a major land war, but when Iuz's puppets in Stonefist swarmed into Tenh with barbarian help in CY 582, something snapped within Ivid.

The reports of war, blood, and great conquests being made by the hated barbarians and barely-civilized Fists of the North excited and enraged the overking. Egged on by the priesthood of Hextor, Ivid entered the fray by storm-

# The Millenium Empire

ing into Nyron and its ally Almor.

However, even before the Great Kingdom went to war, dangerous changes had occurred within its borders. It was an open secret that Ivid V had baatezu within his Companion Guard, and the forbidding figures of the Fiend-Knights of Doom struck fear into all. Their name itself was a flamboyant, excessively-stated mockery as were their uniforms. They wore gold visors to mock knights and warrior-priests of good deities such as Heironeus.

There was worse, of course. Ivid's hateful court wizard, Xaene, creator of the fiend-knights, disappeared. It is believed he turned to lichdom, but his successor, Karoolck, turned out to be an even darker and more dangerous mage than Xaene.

Karoolck is known for his development of the fiend armors worn by elite soldiery within Ivid's Companion Guard. The wizard's rise corresponds closely with Ivid's development of a slowly progressive wasting disease.

Ivid confronted important priesthoods in the Great Kingdom. He proclaimed the worship of "Baalz," an alleged power of prosperity and wealth. The name was but an alias for a powerful arch-fiend allied with Ivid (and, more importantly, with Karoolck).

Temple taxes were greatly increased, and when priests and worshipers tried to get around them by holding simple services of reverence in private homes, Ivid proclaimed a "worship tax" on such gatherings. Around the Great Kingdom, priests of non-evil deities were harassed, assassinated, and persecuted. An inevitable showdown followed.

The Patriarch of Pholtus in Rauxes, Emasstus Carcosa, pronounced heresy on Ivid, denouncing him openly as being insane and allied with fiends. He called upon the servants of all non-evil powers to ally and oppose the overking.

Perhaps the old patriarch-sage thought that by stopping short of openly inciting insurrection and overthrowing Ivid he might escape with his life—he did not. Ivid had him arrested for treason and subversion and organized the systematic looting of temples of Pholtus in all lands (though in Ahlissa and Medegia he was defied in this matter).

So, when the Greyhawk Wars came, there was foment enough within the Great Kingdom. Perhaps Ivid thought that a war against foreign states might take the heat out of the situation at home.

## War and Aftermath

The history of the ensuing military campaign is well known (see *Greyhawk Wars*, *Adventurer's Book* or *From The Ashes* for more details).

It is a tribute to Ivid's incompetence that a nation with the vast armies and resources that the Great Kingdom

had was fought to a standstill by much smaller Nyronid. For all the excellence of the Nyronidese armies, and their superb morale and training, Ivid should have been able to crush them.

Instead, such trivial diversions as Ossoon's raid into Ahlissa and Medegia brought out the very worst in Ivid. He became utterly obsessed about such matters and ordered appalling reprisals, verging on genocide, against the people of those lands. He saw it as punishment for treachery in not dealing with such affronts to His Imperial Majesty.

Convinced of treachery among his nobles, he invoked a unique new form of ensuring their obedience. With Hextor's priests and the aid of fiends, he had the nobles slain and brought back to unlife as powerful undead creatures—animuses. He thought that by eliminating their human weaknesses and he could be certain of the loyalty of wholly acquiescent zombie-leigemen.

What he actually had, however, was a large number of very powerful and embittered monsters who retreated to their own lands and simply defied him.

In response, Ivid began executing as many traitors (the vast majority of them imagined traitors) as he could get his once-elite Companion Guard to lay their hands on. Rauxes was awash with blood; by the end of the wars, its population was barely above half its pre-war total.

The supreme irony is that Ivid himself is an animus now. After an assassin's poisoned and enchanted dagger struck him, only this revivification process was able to prevent his death. Still, the process failed in some crucial respect, as Ivid still has the wasting disease he contracted shortly before the wars. The disease appears to be incurable.

Ivid the Undying is dying by the day.

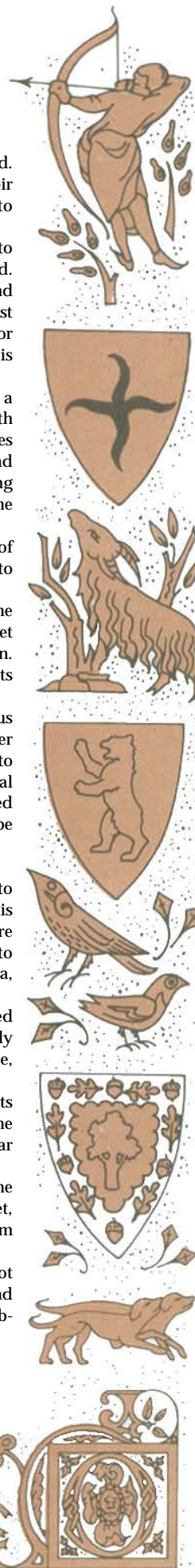
To return to the history of Aerdy: one must add to Ivid's crimes the decimation of Medegia by troops. This came about because of his rage over the Medegian failure to support him in his military campaigns, the failure to resist Osson's raids, the execution of the ruler of Ahlissa, and the destruction of Almor.

All these have simply added to the tidal wave of hatred against the overking which is awash within the Aerdy lands. Even his Naelax cousin, ruler of North Province, has seceded from the kingdom.

Yet, the sheer terror which Ivid still inspires prevents many of the princes from acting directly against him. The legacy of more than 130 years of Naelax rule through fear cannot be shaken off in a few years.

Ivid signed the Pact of Greyhawk to give himself time to prepare for a final, crushing onslaught of Nyrond. Yet, that will almost certainly never come—at least not from Ivid himself.

The mad overking can claim direct control over not much more than a few hundred square miles around Rauxes. And his leigemen find pursuing their own squab-





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bles—building their own empires within old Aerdy—much more interesting than sending their armies to Nyronnd. They have no intention of leaving their own landholdings vulnerable to opportunistic conquest by their neighbors.

Ivid believes himself to command great provincial armies, which have in actual fact long marched homewards.

Aerdy is now a nation-state no longer as the gazetteer chapters show. The greatest of all empires of the Flanaess has passed into history.

## What Made For Greatness?

And yet, how came that empire to greatness?

To be sure, part of the reason for Aerdi dominance was the weakness of the Flan opposition when the Oeridians arrived. Divided, not many in number, with few demihumans outside of specific enclaves, the Flan were readily overcome. However, the Oeridians also kept the Baklunish people marginalized to the northwest of the Flanaess and drove the Suloise to the uttermost southern margins. They overcame all comers and rivals. How so?

## Magic

After the Invoked Devastation, the Oeridians managed to save more of their great magical knowledge and profound lore than the Bakluni or Suel peoples did. The concentration on "combat magic" by Oeridian mages was ruthless and played a key role in strategic defeats of the Suel, with their subtler wizardry, in particular.

Initially, this powerful resource kept the Oeridians on top, but in the long run it stilted the creativity of their wizards—over-specialization leads to insights which are too few and of too limited application. Thus, both the dominance and the decline of the Oeridians can be seen in their wizardry.

The priesthoods of the Oeridians also played a vital role. Deities of travel, such as Procan, Celestian, and Fharlanghn supported their people's restless drives to new lands. Zilchus's priests played a key role in supplying, provisioning, and distributing resources and goods. The martial priesthoods of Heironeous, Hextor, and even Erythnul all had their role in driving on Oeridian armies.

The Heironeous-Hextor enmity actually drove the armies of different houses of Aerdi to greater struggles and competition for glory. Against the Suloise in particular, this combination of priesthoods proved highly effective. The Suel pantheon had few potent deities. Among only three intermediate powers, Lendor's faith was a stagnant, wholly uncreative one, and that of Wee Jas was too mystical, too fixed to lead active resistance to the Oeridians.

The evil Suloise deities too often failed to strengthen

their people, but rather to conceal them at the margins, in the shadows, unable to oppose the strength of the Oeridians save by subversion and sabotage. Consider Pyremius and Syrul, for example; the are powers of lies, deceit, and poisonings.

Thus, the Suel people were easily driven like the wind before the wrathful Oeridian armies, marginalized to the boundaries of the Flanaess.

## Logistics

Just as magic proved a major element for defeating the Suel folk in particular, the superior "technology" of the Oeridians helped them defeat the Bakluni and Flan.

More familiar with long marches and extended campaigns of warfare, the Oeridians knew the vital need for supplies, building bridges, gathering information on natural obstacles, fording places at rivers, and very simple elements of warfare such as the value of archers and how and when to use them. This was a key element in the defeat of the Bakluni and Suel people, who were at the time behind the Oeridian development of crossbows and chain mail armor.

A notable special case are the magical roads, the *dirawaen* in Old Oeridian, crafted by combat mages using earth elementals they otherwise commanded in battle. With special weather-resistant magics woven into their crafting, these roads made travel and provisioning much easier for the Oeridian invaders.

The Oeridians were just one step ahead with such simple elements of warfare. Add to this the work of the priests of Zilchus and the recipe for Oeridian success reveals itself.

## The Will to Win

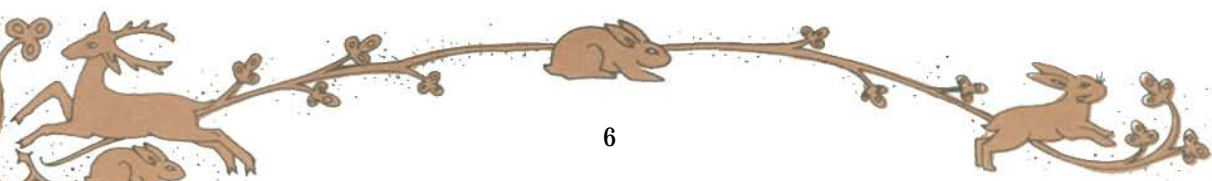
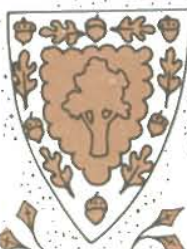
Finally, the Oeridians created their great empire because their great commanders, mages, and tribal leaders believed that this was their destiny.

Driven from their homelands by a great cataclysm, they founded the great capital of Rauxes nearly 4,000 miles from their ancient homeland. No other people traveled nearly as far of their own volition (the Suel were forced to do so).

Restless and driven, great pre-Aerdy commanders of warfare such as Andorann, Leuk-O, with his massive magical juggernaut, and Tuerny the Merciless conquered vast swathes of land because this was what they had to do. No matter how rich and fertile any particular land might be, there was always an imperative to expand further, to head beyond, to conquer the vastness of the Flanaess and gain the longed-for glory of triumph and rulership.

Other races did not possess this burning fire.

The Flan were a simple people; nomads do not have such territorial imperatives, and they did not have the



# The Millenium Empire

technology nor the desire to build great castles and fortifications to defend the lands they originally held. The Bakluni were too given to contemplation, mysticism, and hampered by a fatalism which the reverence of Istus brings. The Suel were simply too cruel, too mean of heart and spirit. Oeridian soldiers were fully prepared to die for the greatness of their people. The Suel were too selfish, too limited in their world view, to die for anything. And so, the Oeridians triumphed.

## Wild Cards

The Oeridians brought a handful of magical artifacts of extraordinary antiquity with them.

Until its rumored destruction by the earth elementals of Al-Fasrallah, the Mighty Servant of Leuk-O—a huge war machine/juggernaut resistant to damage from weapons and magic—and the similar machine of Lum the Mad wreaked havoc on opposing armies. Orbs of dragonkind were used to capture dragons from the Griff-Corusk Mountains and press them into service. The effects of a squadron of dragons creating magical fear in a wide swathe was decisive in many a battle.

Of course, such artifacts as these and the crystal of the ebon flame and Johydee's mask are well known to sages and students of history. Other artifacts of equal power of non-Oeridian origin are known to them also. But the timing of the use of the artifacts the Oeridians possessed, and the employ of planar travel and teleportation to move them from one site of battle to another with great speed, made the artifacts devastating in the hands of Oeridian combat mages.

The second wild card comes in the form of deposits of rare magical ores in Oerth's crust. The dweomerstones and related magical gems around the Nyr Dyv (see Iuz the Evil) are one example of these, but Oeridian mages and priests proved to be of unequalled excellence in tracking down fragments of magical meteorites, stones, or crystals—some magically shaped by the of powers and avatars when they still walked Oerth's lands.

In some places, such as The Causeway of Fiends, whole blocks of such ores could be extracted and enchanted. The most fell and dire of these magical deposits, of course, is the Cauldron of Night from whence the malachite throne itself was crafted.

Though some mages trembled at dealing with such evils, the combat mages of the Oeridians were only too ready to use any source of power if they felt they could contain and channel it. That the darker energies might only escape that control over a period of decades or longer was a long term possibility which mages in the service of aggressive generals did not bother too much about.

These freak finds were of far greater value to the Oeridians than to their rivals because the Oeridians alone

traveled vast distances to find them. The Flan and Bakluni never migrated so far, and the Flan never had the magical skills to understand the energies' value. The Suel never had the time to exploit them—being driven from one land to another by vengeful Oeridian armies. And still the Oeridians had more.

"Johydee's Children" is the name bestowed upon very, very rare Aerdi individuals of exceptional magical gifts. The name is given for two reasons, not because the individuals concerned are literally descended from Johydee. First, Queen Johydee of pre-Devastation history was a priestess of great magical prowess, favored by the gods themselves. Second, Johydee is known for her famed artifact, the mask, which allowed her to resist many forms of magic and to take on the appearance of anyone she chose.

In some sense, Johydee's Children also wear masks. They have the mask's magical resistances to attack forms, and their are also masked.

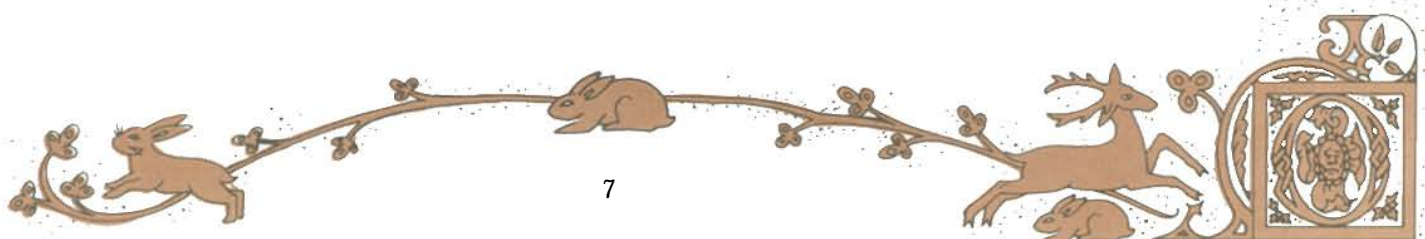
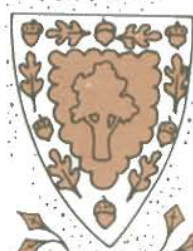
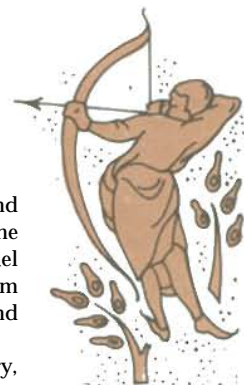
Johydee's Children are strange, otherworldly people. Either they are wholly aloof, without any apparent emotion, or else they seem to live in a spiritual world which raises them far above the cares and feelings of ordinary folk. Either way, those who know them come to think of them as masked, inscrutable, impossible to "read." The Children are loners, never understood by others.

In the history of Aerdy, a handful of these gifted and strange people have played crucial roles. Queen Yalranda is said to have possessed precognitive powers which marked her as one of the Children. The mage Schandor, creator of the Court of Essence in Rauxes, was surely another. He is regarded as the architect of Aerdy's once-famed code of justice. Historians consider that the relative peace which existed between Aerdi royal houses for centuries is largely due to his wisdom building upon the informal understandings developed by Yalranda.

Such influences tend to be subtle and not easily seen. Schandor's legal reforms had an effect only noticed over centuries of time. Yalranda's prophecies to the House of Cranden foresaw their fate, and her writings still succor and protect the few remaining princes of that royal house today.

There are a few exceptions, of course, such as General Azharadian, whose intuitive knowledge of enemy battle formations and tactics surpassed anything his advisers and scryers could match, and who never lost a major battle in his 40 years of commanding Oeridian armies.

Today, there is only one Child alive for certain; Gwydi-esin of the Cranes in the Grandwood Forest. There are old men, riddlers and seers, who tell that The Walker has not yet left the land, but that is another story, too long in the telling for this first chapter.







# The Millenium Empire

## A Vengeance From The Past?

When the Aerdi swept across the lands of the Great Kingdom, there were certain pockets of powerful, ancient magic which they despoiled and razed with fire and acid or drove down into shadows and twilight.

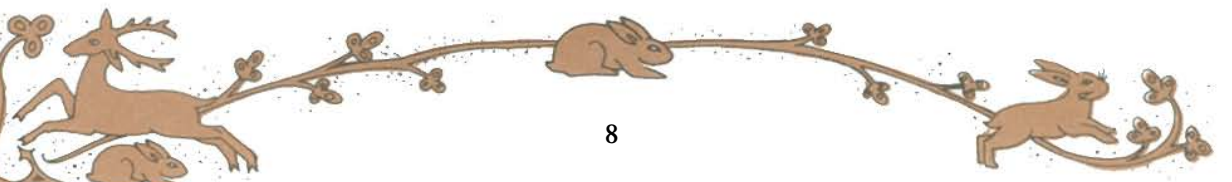
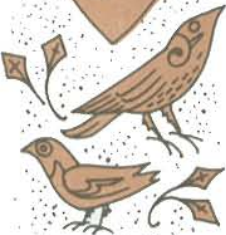
The sacred sites of the Ur-Flannae, the rare mystics of the Flan people (feared by the Flan far more than by the Aerdi), and the haunts of the Old Elves, were among them. Some of those magics, old beyond knowing, are not wholly lost to the world, but they tend now to take terrible forms.

The most feared by far is the magical sword guarded by

the gray elf remnant of the Grandwood. However, the wise and far-sighted see manifestations of this long-repressed magic in the fate of the Great Kingdom. Established by war, force, and brutality in many instances, the Kingdom is doomed to pass into chaos and suffering.

Istus knows, of course; Gwydiesin does; the tiny shrivelled elf known as The Spectre does; and, beyond them, perhaps Mordenkainen has some inkling, and it is surely written in Rillikandren's Book of Hours. But this is getting far ahead of the story.

Such is the history, the peoples, and the destinies of the lands of Aerdy. Its many powers and factions remain for us to understand.



# Powers and Factions

## Peoples of the Land

Later sections will say much more about particular factions (royal houses, social classes, etc.). What follows here is a simple introduction to the peoples of the Aerdi lands, a foundation for later, more detailed accounts.

### Humans

Humans historically have been dominant within Aerdy, and remain the rulers, nobles, mages, sages, and artisans of the lands. There is no specific discrimination against demihumans; it is simply that the lands of the kingdom include very few areas (hills, mountains, etc.) where demihumans traditionally have made their livings and homes.

A dwarven or gnome face is still stared at by many folk in some smaller cities and towns in Aerdi, simply because they are an unusual sight. Humans have run all affairs of the nation here for a long, long time.

The Aerdi are Oeridians, of course, but not many of Aerdy's people are pureblood Aerdi. Lesser Oeridian tribes joined the successful migration of the Aerdi ever-eastward. To the south of the kingdom, the Aerdi interbred with Suel people, and to the east and northeast the Oeridian-Flan mix is common (especially in the Sea Barons lands, and on into Ratik). The Oeridian-Suel and Oeridian-Flan mixes are fairer-skinned than Aerdi purebloods.

There is little discrimination on the basis of human race, since intermixing has been the norm for many centuries. However, some broad distinctions can be noted.

Oeridian-Suel: These folk tend toward evil alignments more predominantly than purebloods. An aptitude for magic runs strongly in certain families, especially for more subtle, arcane, and evil (necromantic) magics. Oeridian-Suel people are often cunning, sly, and distrusted by others.

This is far less true of the Suel-Oeridian mix which dominates the lands of the Sea Barons. A certain degree of cruelty and cowardice is found there, but these folk are more straightforward and less magically adept.

Purebloods: Old Oeridian blood dominates the great central plains lands and royalty (with exceptions noted in gazetteer chapters). Oeridian stock tends to the practical, straightforward, and unimaginative. At least, this is true nowadays, although it was not always so—else, the Oeridians would not have been such magnificent colonialists. Rather, those Oeridians who resist mixing with other peoples and stay pureblooded are those who tend to be distrustful of what they do not know, and consequently lacking in imagination and creativity. Nonetheless, hard work, honesty, and loyalty are the positive side of these folk.

Oeridian-Flan: Because this mix is found to the north and east, which has always been frontier territory, the Oeridian-Flan people tend to be self-reliant, more Chaotic than others, and rugged, hardy, and adventurous. Customs, such as festival rituals, greetings, burial practices, and even religious and superstitious beliefs, show clearly the affinity with the barbarians of the north, even if most Oeridian-Flan folk are settled and "civilized" these days. A rougher, less "cultured," and more forthright people, Oeridian-Flan people are inclined to resent others in Aerdy, feeling that many are milksops, living an easy life in the rich central lands, and have some contempt for them.

These are, of course, generalizations, but like all stereotypes they have some truth in them, or else they would not have become stereotypes. Nonetheless, humans should not be thought of as a single, monolithic bloc, even within the broad racial mixes.

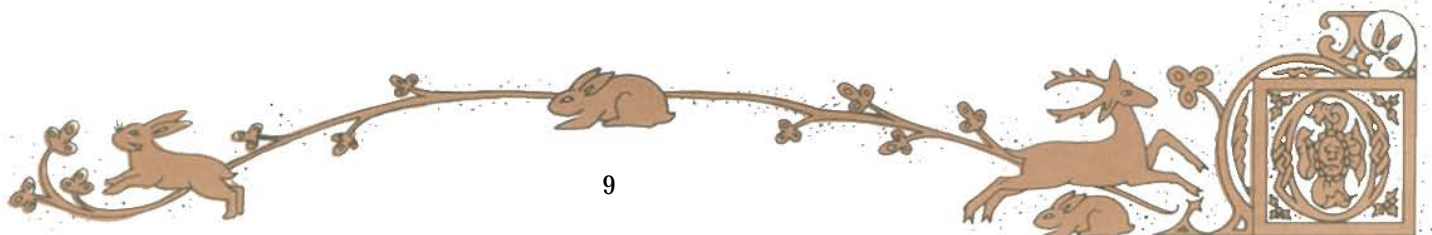
To be sure, Common is spoken everywhere, since Old Oeridian is the root of the Common tongue. But regional dialects are strong. The rural folk of Ahlissa, for example, would struggle to understand the urbanites of Eastfair without them speaking very slowly. What's more, different provinces within Aerdy have peoples with very different typical. For example, the meanness of the men of Ountsy is as legendary as the laziness of the men of the central plains lands. The gazetteer chapters give much more detail on such regional differences.

### Demihumans

Conversely, the only demihuman race of any real note within Aerdi are elves, because of their presence in the Adri and Grandwood forests. There are a handful of evil half-elves serving Aerdi noblemen, but they are rarities. These areas always have been important because of their resources, and elves play a dominant role in dealing with woodsmen and Aerdi merchants who come to trade in the fruits of the forests.

The elven presence is important because of the way elves have become a bastion of resistance to the changes in Aerdi under the House of Naelax; while the wood elves (and fewer high and gray elves) have adhered to the values of Good, they have even more strongly tended to emphasize the value of Chaos, and self-determination.

There is little doubt that resistance to Ivid's oppression, and those of his forefathers', have been made easier because elves retreated into seclusion and self-sufficiency rather than moving to aid those who opposed the overlings more directly. Times are changing, and the druids and rangers of the east find many allies among the elves now. In the Grandwood and Lone Heath in particular, the alliances of elves with humans are vital to the defense of homelands. Still, many such as the Sentinels of the Adri, or the grugach, remain aloof and uncaring of the





# Powers and Factions

fate of humanity.

The other demihuman races are not of importance in nation-wide terms, though a few pockets of dwarves, gnomes and halflings are of note in specific areas.

## Humanoids

An increasing number of humanoid mercenaries have been employed within Aerdy. Originally, their use was confined to the Naelax lands, and especially in the North Province, where Bone March humanoids are used as troops. Ivid himself introduced the fierce Euroz into Rauxes as an elite guard. Recruiting humanoids from the Bone March has become an increasingly common practice outside of the southern lands; some are also recruited from the small enclaves in the Grandwood.

The advantage to the rulers who paid such armies was an instant manpower boost. While the new armies had to be paid, the full productive capacity of the land could still be maintained. Men who might at other times have been recruited forcibly into poorly-equipped peasant levies with wretched morale and training could stick with what they were good at—growing food and making goods—while the orcish militia arrived with fair equipment, fair discipline, and real eagerness for the fray.

During and since the wars, however, these militia and mercenaries have become a major menace in many Aerdy lands, even outside the holdings of those who originally recruited them. With some rulers penniless, some executed and leaving a power vacuum in their lands, and others insane or unable to act, the orcs and the rarer hobgoblins have often become freebooters. They raid, pillage, and go where they please.

Only in North Province, where Herzog Grace Grenell actively allied with the Bone March against Nyronnd, are these troops still reliably under the control of the ruler.

These roaming orc mercenaries are having a good time of it, especially in central lands where the opposition to them is weak and the pickings rich. The orcs have grown wily and smart, and they have altered the practice of warfare and skirmishing in Aerdy. The most famous example of this is the desertion of Prince Trellar's orcish mercenaries to the city of Pontylver in an abortive sacking of that city in Coldeven, CY 585.

Against Trellar's orders, the orcs put up their siege engines and sent a chieftain-emissary into Pontylver. Offered a better pay rate by the city's ruler, the orcs spent two long days in financial discussions before they promptly turned right around and massacred Trellar together with his armies. This has set an interesting precedent for further warfare within Aerdy.

Indeed, in some lands the orcs have settled down and built towns. The most notable examples are the coastal orcs of Montesser on the Spindrift Sound. Thousands of miles from home, with few orcish priests to rabble-rouse

them, these members of a non-influential orcish tribe simply decided that two years of marching was enough and a warm summer with plenty of sun and food in the belly was appealing. Such peaceability is distinctly unusual, however.

## The Royal Houses

There are literally thousands of Aerdi men calling themselves "princes." The politics of the royal houses of Aerdi are subtle and complex, often confusing to outsiders.

Historically, a handful of royal houses have formed the aristocracy of Aerdy. Their relative importance has in some cases waxed and waned historically, in others stayed the same. Some royal houses are strongly identified with land holdings in a particular area, such as the Crandens in Almor, and the Torquanns in southeastern Aerdy. Others have been primarily identified with "spheres of concern," such as the aggressive, soldiering Naelax and the House of Darmen, always to the fore in commerce and trade.

As a thumbnail sketch, the major royal houses of note are:

Naelax: Ruling Royal House, major landholders, noted for their penchant for building large-scale, formidable castles and fortifications—and for their vanity.

Rax-Nyronnd: The Rax line is officially extinct, but there are some illegitimate descendants of Nasri who claim a line to the malachite throne, and historically the house is of major importance because of its junior branch and the foundation of Nyronnd.

Torquann: An Oeridian-Flan-Suel mix, this house has dominated commerce and trade along the eastern coastal provinces. Traditionally aloof in politics, this house has a long, long history of dour, hard, depressive rulers whose lands suffer heavy taxation and repressive laws.

Garasteth: The House of Garasteth is feared for its mages and sages, and for its inscrutability and arcane knowledge. The house is not much given to temporal power, but sees itself as a guardian of true Oeridian culture and wisdom. The house is increasingly influential among local rulers given the threat of the Suloise Scarlet Brotherhood to the south (and in the Lordship of the Isles). Garasteth rulers are hard, cold, cruel individuals, but they are to be feared on account of their devotion to learning and their formidable intellects.

Cranden: Once the royal house, the Crandens have dominated Almor and Ahlissa for centuries. A worldly, urbane aristocracy, their prestige plummeted with the secession of Almor and the abortive attempt to ally South Province with the Iron League. The House of Naelax moved swiftly to remove control of these provinces from Cranden, but the other houses were not prepared to see

# Powers and Factions

Cranden wholly destroyed and exerted pressure which even the overkings could not wholly resist. The House of Cranden is important because it resists the more insane evils of the overking, and the old affinity with the Iron League is not completely lost. Irongate and Sunndi have friends they trust among the lesser princes of this house.

Darmen: Often thought flighty and trivial by the more powerful political houses, the House of Darmen has devoted itself to trade and commerce and found its niche there. Easily the richest house, Darmen has massive landholdings from eastern Ahlissa through the central provinces with their rich and fertile plains, even as far as North Province. The House of Darmen believes itself fated to be the next Ruling Royal House, with its ambitious young Prince Xavener employing a sensible long-term strategy. Xavener has no intention of wasting his armies assaulting Rauxes. Instead, he bankrolls mercenaries for competing houses elsewhere. Often, he bankrolls both sides. That way, he is certain to back the winner—who will owe him a very large favor. When the time comes, with everyone else's armies decimated, Xavener will call in those favors and march on Rauxes. Such is his plan, at any rate. However, not all in the House of Darmen support him.

There are no formal heads of houses. Power, more than seniority,—except in the case of the House of Garasteth—brings deference. Still, with major princes owning lands so far apart and so extensive, it is difficult for any one to truly dominate the rest.

There have always been land struggles, intrigues, and rivalries between and within these houses, of course. The most bitter between-house rivalries are the Naelax/Rax-Nyrond feud, and the Torquann-Garasteth feud. Where these are important, they are described in the gazetteer chapters. However, the houses have historically avoided their intrigues breaking out into war, with exceptions such as the Turmoil between Crowns—but that was a war over the Throne itself. They have done so in two ways; through cross-fostering, and dynastic marriages.

## Royal Fostering

It has been common practice in Aerdy for centuries for the recognized heir of one royal house to be fostered from age two or three until early adulthood, about age 14, by the leading family of another royal house. Gradually, this practice spread until it became commonplace among all princely families. The original idea was that the fostered child would be a hostage to ensure peace, and at the same time would learn the values and ideas of other houses. It worked, in that one house would often not attack the lands of another for fear that its own heir would be slain.

Since the accession of Ivid I, however, such fostering only became common among families who actually

trusted each other, an increasingly unlikely state of affairs. Nonetheless, knowing who has fostered whom among Aerdi royalty is often vital to understanding local politics.

## Marriage and Property

Royal marriages are a complex business. Originally, while inheritance of property followed the male line, the marriage partners took the family name of the pre-eminent royal house in the match. In the beginning this was not too difficult, as a fairly clear pecking-order of royal houses could be agreed.

However, as Aerdy grew in size, and especially as some houses came to eminence not through landholdings (the traditional indicator of eminence) but through trade or learning and magical skills, very complex negotiations had to be engineered. Sometimes, two houses would agree on a trade-off, whereby two marriages would take place at the same time, with each pair taking the name of the other house to ensure equity.

Dowries for brides became the subject of negotiations which could last for months. In one legendary case, the negotiations dragged on 27 years, until the bride-to-be fell out of a carriage and was stomped into an early grave by the following cavalry detachment.

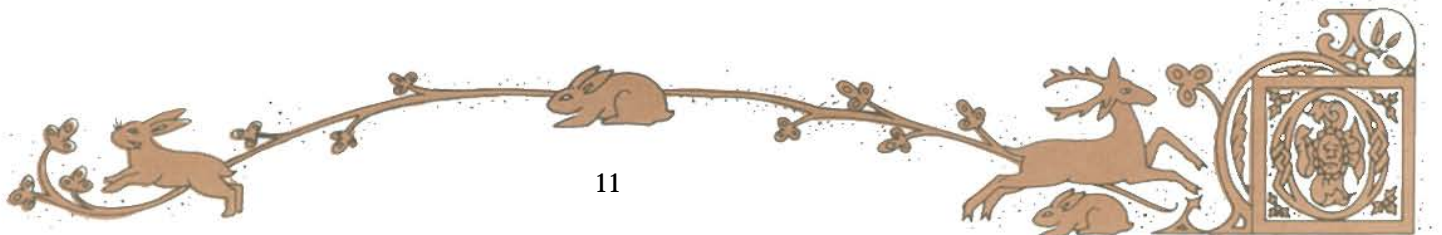
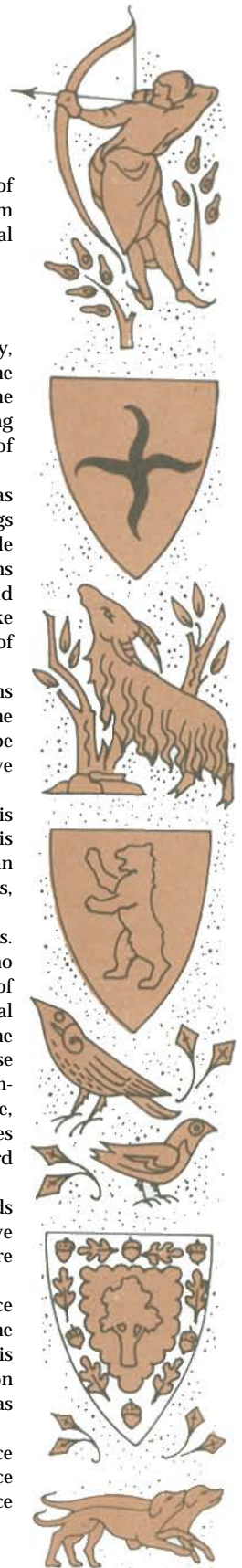
Another problem must be added to this. Inheritance is not a simple business. A ruling noble (prince) leaves his landholdings to one heir (son), but his wealth other than landholdings is distributed equally to all his male heirs, and all of them may also call themselves "prince."

This leads to a bewildering hierarchy among princes. At the top are the big landholders. Next are those who have inherited a fair sum of wealth, usually in the form of lesser landholdings, since the eldest son may make a deal with his brothers, giving them land in return for the money he needs to run his estates. Finally, there are those who inherited almost no money from wastrel or incompetent fathers. A subtle and complex social etiquette, almost impossible for outsiders to understand, regulates the behavior of these different shades of "princes" toward each other.

Some princes are very powerful men, owning hundreds of thousands of square miles of land. Some princes have but a few coins in their pocket and hardly know where the next meal is coming from.

All this makes for extraordinary politics. A prince might cash in his house affiliation for a decent dowry one year, and the next year could decide to switch back if this seems like a smart thing to do (e.g., to avoid an attack on his lands by a house which is a rival to the one he has married into).

Increasingly, princes only use their first names, "Prince Cardren," instead of the old form of their titles, "Prince Cardren of Torquann." Some use their place of residence





# Powers and Factions

in their title, since this is a nod in the direction of their house affiliation without being blatant or definitive about it. For example, "Prince Carrdren of Montrey" implies that the man is of the Torquann House, since they dominate landholdings around Montrey. But their ownership isn't exclusive, so this leaves room for doubt. Shifting affiliations, and disguise of one's own real loyalties, and a willingness to ditch them when needs be, have become a hallmark of the past two generations of Aerdi princes. This helps explain the wretched mess the country has got itself into.

## Animus Nobles

A special note must be made of these monsters. Individual rulers are described in depth later, but a general point which must be kept in mind is that their troops, and subjects, are generally terrified of them.

It is one thing to serve an evil, cruel, cunning ruler. It is quite another to serve an inhuman monster with no need of rest or sleep—with cold rages incapable of human comprehension, which can bring men to their knees with but a wave of its hand.

The dread these creatures inspire explains much behavior which might otherwise seem hard to understand.

## Nobles, Merchants, and Peasants

### Aristocrats

As noted, not all princes are landholders, but almost all major landholders are princes (with some "secondary aristocracy"; see below).

No man can hold a land grant without the permission of the overking, and this prevents any freeman-peasant from becoming a landed aristocrat.

Technically, as in so many other lands in the Flanaess, the overking grants landholdings to princes. Historically this amounted simply to the overking acknowledging land ownership by houses, and accepting the responsibility of mediating disputes about such ownership.

Since Aerdy is a huge land, the princes then appointed landholding liegemen, sometimes lesser princes. Such liegemen either leased land from princes, bought it (very unusual, but the House of Darmen made important gains this way), or were even more rarely given a land grant by a grateful prince in return for an important service. Almost always, whatever the arrangement, the liegeman had permanent obligations to the prince—payment of taxes, and making some or all of his soldiery available in times of need, were the usual burdens.

These liegemen form the bulk of the "secondary aristocracy" of Aerdy; the Dukes, Barons, Counts, and so on. Some are genuinely powerful in their own right, with sizeable estates and large castles. Others are petty despots

who paid a goodly sum to a prince to grant them such a title. Only the overking, or a prince who is head of a royal house, can grant such titles; poor princes are often willing to sell a title.

The House of Darmen has a strong representation in this secondary aristocracy, often through the women of the house who marry outside of royalty and whose husbands then buy or acquire a barony or duchy. The important point here is that these secondary titles mean relatively little. A baron in Furyondy is a powerful man with a sizeable army and much land; in Aerdy, he may have but a few acres and a couple of dozen mercenary thugs at his back. So, just as with princes, other aristocrats come in all shapes and sizes.

Orders of knighthood are less important in Aerdy than in lands such as Furyondy and the Theocracy of the Pale. Questing knights bravely battling dangers and perils are uncommon in a land without mountains or hills, largely civilized, and mostly comprised of great swathes of arable land. Dragon-killing isn't easy when the dragons just aren't there to be killed. Likewise, moralistic knights, such as the Templars of the Theocracy, are thin on the ground in a nation which has slowly slid into degeneracy for many generations.

The few orders of knighthood which exist are special, limited in number, and without much influence. The Knights Majestic of the Companion Guard are impressive servants of Ivid, to be sure, but beyond Rauxes they are of little note. Likewise, many local rulers have knights in their service, but these are "household knights." There is nothing to compare with the Knights of the Hart in Furyondy, Veluna, and farther abroad to the far west, for example. Finally, one might note that in a land where to be a baron or count may mean little or nothing, even some princes are paupers. The title of knight is hardly an ambition many cherish in their hearts.

### Merchants

Merchants have played a vital role in the development of Aerdy. Dominated by the House of Darmen and those it appoints to guilds and societies, merchants have been the bankrollers for many a prince's ambitions. Because of the odd system of inheritance of money, many a ruling prince has had to borrow large sums to finance the support and expansion of his estates. Imperial edicts on what interest merchant-moneylenders can charge on borrowing has to be carefully balanced; the withdrawal of Darmen's goodwill would have a stultifying effect on Aerdy.

The famous charisma and charm of the House of Darmen has headed off resentment among noble borrowers, though, and the scions of this house have been prepared, at times, to write off some debits to keep things sweet with princes who they might want to call in favors from at a later time.

# Powers and Factions

An example of how merchants have played a powerful role in Aerdy's growth is the Windmarch, the great series of trade fairs which travel through Aerdy west to east from Planting right through to Patchwall. The name comes from the old belief that the roads and paths used by anyone traveling from one fair to the next followed the prevailing wind, which usually comes from the west from late spring into late summer.

These fairs stimulate trade and barter and generate income and wealth for many—from tolls on major roads, tavern taxes, hostelry bills, etc.

Merchants also have funded much of the growth of cities, paying for bridges, docks and wharves, and improvements which make trade easier. As a result, merchants who are not princes still hold exalted positions in Aerdy society. For example, wealthy merchants are the only men other than princes allowed to walk the central Great Way in Rauxes. Certain clothes, such as silks and guild regalia, only can be worn by merchants or guildmasters. For anyone else to wear them is a crime which is heavily punished.

However, Aerdy merchants are famously amoral. They have little in the way of principles, and they are perfectly prepared to rob a vendor or customer blind if they think they can get away with it.

This is less true when they deal with people they know. However, merchants gain kudos by fleecing some first-time or ignorant buyer of his hard-earned gold, and there is little principle to be found among these folk. Importantly, women play as active a role in trade as men, which is somewhat unusual in Aerdy life.

Lastly, there is a powerful class of "landed merchants." These are men who have bought, or taken a very long lease upon, sizeable landholdings and who in return become almost merchants in the service of their patron prince in exchange for the prince paying for the militia, men-at-arms, and the like who protect the merchant's land holdings.

In all respects, merchants have a social standing which skilled workers and artisans do not have. This is partly historical, because of the role of Zilchus's priesthood in the expansion of Aerdy, and partly a rub-off from royalty, since the House of Darmen has so many merchants among its number. Indeed, in addition to the "landed merchant" one might take note of the "merchant princes" which this house contains within its ranks.

## Peasants

Aerdy always has been a feudal nation. There is no history of "free boroughs," democracy, towns run by elected burghers, or anything similar. Most of its people are, as their parents and grandparents were, feudal serf peasants.

Peasants have a life in Aerdy which is similar to life

experienced by peasants anywhere.

The huge Flanmi-Thelly river systems make central Aerdy a vast rolling plain of arable land, with river basins providing excellent land for growing grain and vegetables. Livestock farming becomes more important away from the regularly-flooded river basins. Peasants include serfs, "freemen" who lease small farmholdings from the liegemen of princes or landed merchants, but they never own the land they cultivate.

Peasants are, ultimately, the property of the prince owning the land they farm on. In some areas, they are treated reasonably well; in others, atrociously, depending on the local ruler.

Not unlike Furyondy (as described in *The Marklands*), a peasant farmer works long hours tending his crops. He might have one or two oxen or cattle to help with plowing; he might share ownership of such beasts with a neighbor. He will have a few chickens for eggs and perhaps a goat for milk and cheese. He will not have a barn, or anything much beyond a simple dwelling, which may be even of mud and wattle in areas with little wood. He likely uses a liegeman's barn for his hay and perhaps even borrows the liegeman's wagons for taking goods to markets. The peasant might share his own dwelling with some of his animals, the better to look after them (keeping them warm in winter and away from raiders and poachers in the summer).

The peasant family will make cheese, whey, jams, and preserves from summer fruits bought at market. Some peasants do not have an oven, though, so making pies from meat, fowl, or even fish might be the province of the local baker-pieman.

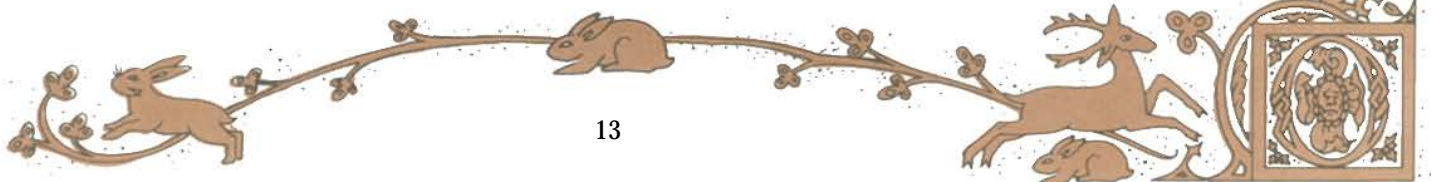
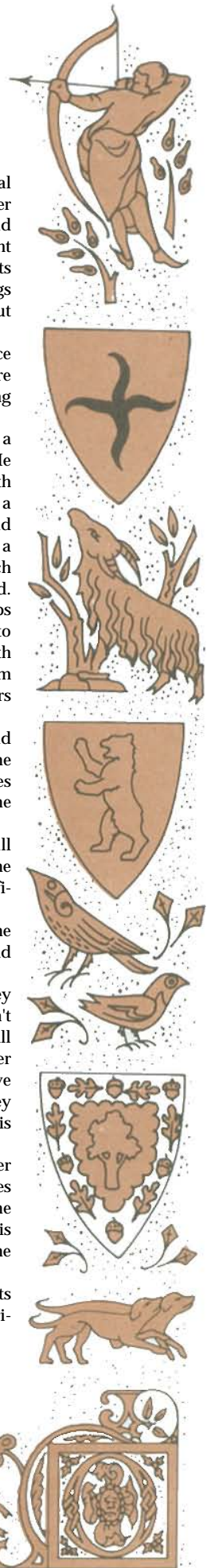
When the time comes to pay his lord, the farmer will worry himself sick trying as best he can to be sure that the goods he must give are of acceptable quality and sufficient quantity.

Children of such families don't get educated; that's the exclusive province of aristocracy, merchants, and artisans.

Most peasants won't ever have seen a Gold Ivid. They live by barter. They take little to market, since they don't produce much more than they can eat on their small holdings. Often, most trade is done by the landholder himself. Again, the majority of peasants won't ever have traveled more than a few miles from the places there they were born, though along riverways where longer travel is feasible this may not be so.

So, this is a simple life, but the great shadow over Aerdy needs to be discussed here. *From The Ashes* gives Evil in all forms as the dominant alignment of the peoples of Aerdy. The nature and prevalence of Evil is discussed below, but is it really true that this is the dominant alignment for such ordinary folk?

The answer is both no and yes. No, because peasants don't truly have alignments. They wake up at some horri-





# Powers and Factions

fyng hour of the morning, toil at endless hours of drudgery in the fields, spend the few non-working days they have drinking themselves into a stupor, and then they get up and do it all over again.

One might indeed say there is a dominant alignment of NE; Neutral-Exhausted. These people are too tired to be good or evil.

However, it is equally true that the attitudes and behavior even of peasants has shifted toward the malign. Generations of increasingly cruel rulers, and the stalking of the lands by orcs, evil priests, and the like does takes its toll after years. One peasant might murder another for a single coin in his pocket—or because he uttered some personal insult which might have simply led to a fistfight even 20 or 30 years past.

What was once an insular uncertainty toward outsiders and foreigners has turned into outright hostility—even threats and possible attack in the hope of taking money, clothing, possessions, anything of value. The ordinary people have been affected by the changes among their rulers; they see Evil triumph, and they begin to affiliate with it themselves. This is, perhaps, the greatest of all the tragedies of this once-great nation.

Yet, while such behavior is certainly evil, it has to be understood in part as a response to the recent changes in Aerdy. Ordinary people, often given to superstition, are afraid. The druid or priest who once blessed their crops and healed their wounds and injuries might be found on a sunny morning with a poisoned dagger in his back—another victim of the Midnight Darkness agents.

A stranger seen on the outskirts of town could turn out to be a disguised fiend, or even a spy for an army seeking fields and crops to pillage for supplies. Even seeing soldiers of one's own landholder could herald an impossible demand for taxes, livestock, or worse. Life always has been hard for peasants, and with many evil rulers they were subject to humiliations and oppression they hated but learned to survive. Now, however, so many lands are submerged in a sea of chaos that almost nothing, no-one, can be trusted. Small wonder that so many just take what they can, and regard might as right.

This is not true everywhere, of course, but this gloomy picture is all too accurate for most of Aerdy's people.

## Rulership and Law

The historical principle of rulership was strongly linked to land ownership: the overking was technically the only man able to make dispensation of land grants, but was also often only acknowledging existing ownership within royal houses by so doing. Thus, the overking's power was total in theory, but constrained in practice.

This is the basic principle of Aerdi rulership—it can also be seen in ex-Aerdy lands such as Furyondy.

This principle was compromised after the civil war,

when Ivid I was forced in effect, though this was never formally acknowledged in treaty, to allow the rulers of the North and South Provinces, and Medegia, to act as the final authorities for dealing with landholdings in those lands. The pretense was maintained that Ivid still held this right over all lands, while in practice it devolved wholly to the provincial rulers who no longer presented formal petitions to be rubber-stamped by the overking.

However, that still left Ivid in control of most of the Great Kingdom in theory, and since Naelax held much of the lands in North Province, it made little difference in practice there at least.

While the Ruling Royal House is hereditary (passing from Cranden to Rax-Nyrond by proclamation of one overking, and to Naelax by assassination), a complex power game has been played out between the royal houses. Ultimately, the overking needed the backing of at least a sizeable minority of royal house leaders (landowning princes) for any major actions he might take, such as waging war.

There never has been any element of a written treaty or constitution here; everything was done by mutual understandings and acceptance of the realities of power.

The House of Naelax changed this. Gradually, Naelax came to rule by fear. The overkings regarded the other royal houses as pawns to be trifled with, or simply dominated and ordered to do what was wished.

The use of humanoid mercenaries, the priesthood of Hextor, and the employ of fiends provided the muscle and magic to force their policies home. During the Turmoil between Crowns, important princes of other royal houses looked at Prince Ivid's strength and decided to accept the inevitable. They thought they could accept a peace and plan together for the future, perhaps deposing Ivid when the opportunity arose.

Ivid's use of tanar'ri assassins, ritual sorceries, and superbly-commanded orcish armies—with Hextor's priests in the vanguard—taught them differently. When anyone dared raise a hand against the overking, the response could be swift and crushingly decisive. The House of Naelax ruled Aerdy with a fist of iron. The kingdom changed from an aristocracy to a dictatorship.

Ivid I also instituted a policy, which his descendants followed, of confiscating the land of princes who did not yield the appropriate tax revenues. Usually, Ivid's own chancellors and tax gatherers cooked the books to make sure that taxes did not appear to have been paid. Ivid's typical strategy was to dispatch an army to seize the lands, overthrow the offending prince, and then place the territory in "royal trust." Monies from the lands were then distributed throughout the royal houses (with Naelax taking the lion's share). A crony or puppet of the overking would administer the lands as a "protector."

Ivid was able to get away with this because he was very crafty concerning who to target, avoiding anyone truly

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powerful or with strong alliances. Further, because part of the proceeds went to royal houses which otherwise would not have had any of the bounty of the seized lands, organized opposition didn't materialize.

Some of the "protectors" remain autonomous minor local rulers in Aerdy today.

Following the secession of Almor, Ivid I also had drawn up the infamous Sedition Proclamations which tied the provinces of the land more closely to the crown through a complex set of laws involving liegemen oaths, taxes and tithes to be paid to the crown, regulation of tolls on rivers and major roads, reciprocal obligations regarding calls upon armies, appointment of the now-notorious judges of the sessions, and the like.

It was some time before princes realized exactly what these laws did. Taken as a whole, the laws brought more and more of everyday life under the scrutiny and control of the overking. Since the overking was later able to claim that Ahlissan independence was thwarted by these laws, again they did not inspire the revolt they might have.

The Naelax overkings also established a network of spies and assassins whose loyalty to the malachite throne was never in much doubt. Fiends, other conjured extraplanar beings, distant relatives of the overking, priestlings of Hextor and other dark powers gave the Naelax overkings a firm grip on their dominion.

Still, the overkings did not have complete control; Aerdy is too huge for that (covering far in excess of a million square miles). But what the House of Naelax did stamp out, beyond doubt, was any significant, organized opposition to its rulership.

And one must return to the sheer power of the fear the House of Naelax generated. The terrors of the Screaming Column and the Endless Death were only the most lurid visible symbols of the overking's clear power to make any who opposed him suffer the most appalling torments imaginable.

To these facts must be added the genius of the House of Naelax. The divide-and-rule principle allied to a brilliant flair for making sure none could feel secure of their position, no matter how powerful they might be. How Naelax has handled the priesthood of Hextor, as described below, is a classic example of this.

## Laws

In the current time, the Imperial Laws are of little importance; now, local rulers administer their own affairs. These tend to be harsh, with crimes against property punished much more severely than crimes against the person—unless the person injured is an aristocrat or merchant of note. There is no such thing as a code of law which runs throughout Aerdy now. Might is right, and it dispenses law as it will.

During its centuries of greatness, Aerdy had a famed

legal code the envy of many other nations. Local rulers appointed their own magistrates and justices of the peace to deal with minor offenses and civil disputes. From the offices of the prime (see below), guidelines were issued regarding penalties and sentences. Local rulers had the right to vary these within certain boundary limits. Under the rule of Cranden and Rax-Nyrond, these penalties were not excessively harsh, and the general principle that an offender should make restitution to victims or their families, through fines or forced labor, guaranteed that most folk thought the laws of the land reasonably just. If they were the injured party, they gained recompense, and some local rulers would even give an immediate small payment following judgment to help victims—as would the temples of deities whose priests formed most of the judiciary. If they offended, penalties were not thought excessive.

For more important crimes, the judges of the sessions held court at regular meetings (assizes) in each major estate or landholding. And the Court of Essence was the supreme arbiter of major disputes between royal houses. Both these, and the general system of local law, were devised by Schandor—and these special judicial elements are described below.

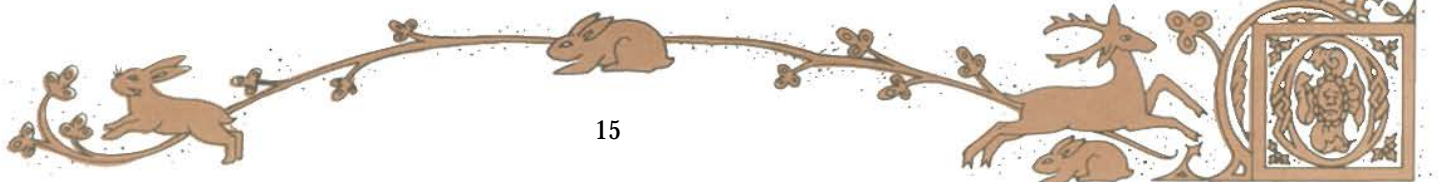
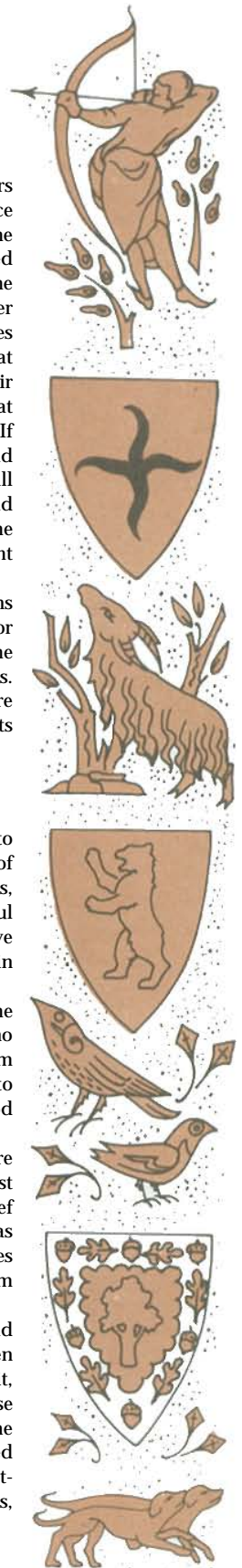
## Judges of the Sessions

The brief of these judges, appointed by the prime, was to try major crimes, such as murder, arson, theft of goods of 500 Gold Ivids in value or greater, magical crimes, sedition, etc. Historically, they were priests of Lawful deities such as Pholtus. Neither they nor any relative through blood or marriage could own any land within 300 miles of the place where they gave judgment.

What this meant in effect was that the judges of the sessions came to try cases in lands where they had no direct political or family interests, and this helped them not just to be impartial, which they usually were, but to be seen to be impartial, which as Schandor understood was what really mattered.

Under the rule of Naelax, the session judges were subverted to the interests of the overking. The most infamous instance is the slaying of the prime, the "Chief Justice" appointed by the overking. This individual was usually the patriarch of Pholtus in Rauxes, but sometimes the man was a leading patriarch of great wisdom from another city.

Ivid I had Prime Remmanen secretly assassinated and replaced by a doppelganger in his service. The prime then instructed the judges of the sessions by letter and writ, subtly wording his instructions so as to favor the House of Naelax and the desires of the overking. When the doppelganger was unmasked in CY 456, Ivid feigned outrage and immediately replaced the prime by appointing three judges—a patriarch of Pholtus, one of Zilchus,





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and one of Hextor. This slowed the system down and introduced the first systematic element of evil into the picture.

Ivid I enhanced the latter by effecting a purge of priests of Pholtus among judges of the sessions, since after the business of the doppelganger he could claim that this was a wise precaution.

In addition, Ivid decreed that a small detachment of imperial soldiers should accompany each judge of the sessions for security reasons. These soldiers were carefully picked, and always included a priest of Hextor among the retinue to act as a spy for Ivid.

Being constantly accompanied by this miasma of evil certainly had an effect. The decisions of the judges came, by degrees, closer and closer to the opinions and views of the overking. Ivid I and his descendants were crafty; they knew how to subvert an independent judiciary for their own ends, a key part of a strategy of domination.

There are still a handful of judges of the sessions in the lands of Aerdy, and some of them still have influence and importance in local areas; the gazetteer chapters give details.

## The Court of Essence

Another of Schandor's innovations was the Court of Essence in Rauxes. In this chamber, disputes between royal houses or major landholders were resolved in the presence of the prime and three other patriarchs, one each of the Lawful alignments.

The overking had the imperial right to summon disputants to this court at any time—if he deemed disputes serious enough for this. Within the court, powerful magic dispelled or held in abeyance all enchantments such as *undetectable lie*, *mind blank*, *amulets of proof against detection and location*, and the like. Those protesting their cases were magically compelled to tell the truth, and also compelled to state their emotions, their feelings of grievance, their fears, and their apprehensions concerning the dispute.

No mortal standing within the Court could do other than tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in reply to the questioning of the prime. All royal houses respected the court, and many differences between them were resolved quietly by the disputants rather than baring their souls there. Schandor's aim was quietly achieved; many disputes came to resolve themselves without the need for powerful intervention and rulings by third parties which might have left one or other side aggrieved. It also taught nobles how to resolve disputes for themselves, which aided peace.

Needless to say, the House of Naelax managed to subvert this, too. With fiendish aid, and years of work from Ivid I's Court Wizard, they warped the magic here. Now when the overking so wishes and has his regalia of

office with him, he can command any mortal being within the court to answer him truthfully as before. But he also can force anyone standing within the court to speak words which he wills them to utter (no saving throw allowed to resist).

Because the Court of Essence has such a long attributed history of drawing the truth from people, it was many years before people began to realize that the "confessions" extracted there by Naelax inquisitors might not be entirely reliable. Now, the Court of Essence is discredited as a place where the truth can be learned, but it still has value to Ivid V as an interrogation chamber.

As noted, Aerdy no longer has an effective code of national law. If the DM needs a legal system in game play, it is easiest to use the City of Greyhawk legal code (from the boxed set of that name) as a template. Punishments from that code can be applied outside of lands with evil rulers (which are few and far between).

In lands with evil rulers, or places which are plunged into chaos, the DM can decide what punishments he wants. The major interest of the enforcers of law is extracting monies from fines, or simple brutalizing the most guilty. If player characters can pay to escape some trumped-up charge (or actual justice), they can probably go free. Conversely, if they're innocent and penniless, they'll end up as slave labor or rotting in jail.

## Law Enforcement

Law enforcement is equally anarchic in modern-day Aerdy. Historically, each local landholder was charged with the responsibility of maintaining a law-enforcing militia, which usually doubled as a standing army (or at least a well-trained peasant levy, in the main).

Schandor's original legal code also specified that at least half of this militia must be of local peasantry, the idea being to make sure that ordinary folk did not come to see law enforcers as people other than themselves, uncaring about the concerns of ordinary people. This certainly sustained people's faith in law enforcement.

Gazetteer chapters describe the level of law enforcement in Aerdy lands. But in general, law enforcers are unscrupulous individuals who are readily bribeable, eager to grab a few gold pieces to look the other way when a crime is being committed. They have little taste for any sustained pursuit of a criminal, and any communication between lands or cities is negligible unless very serious crimes, such as mass murder or use of powerful magic, are involved.

## Trade, Taxes, and Money

Although most lands are chaotic now, some trade, barter, and semblance of civilized dealings goes on. People still eat, grow food, produce goods, and try to sell and barter

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them, and local rulers certainly try to tax everything.

## Resources

Aerdy has little in the way of mineral deposits. The electrum mines of Bellport, the gemstones of the Thelly, a little ore in the Gull Cliffs, the mines on the margins of the Iron Hills, and the overpanned stretch of the Flanmi known as the Nugget Run are all one can find here save for a few drift mines and freak deposits (details in gazetteer chapters).

The mines of the Blemu Hills are lost to the Bone March humanoids now. Food and cloth are the staples of the land, with the central lands and river basins most productive in this respect.

Aerdy used to trade with many nations for goods it needed, most notably iron, copper, and alloys. Such goods came from lands thousands of miles away, usually shipped in through the City of Greyhawk and through Woolly Bay eastward, or across the Nyr Dyv and through Urnst, Nyron and Almor.

Some covert trade was conducted with the barbarians through the Lords of the Isles and even the Sea Barons or Ratik (which was also a source of good woods). In return, Aerdy exported food, cloth, weapons, and a little in the way of gems, worked items from artisans, and rarer commodities such as Grandwood and Adri herbs and the infamous pickled eel saveloys of Winetha. Such external trade has now mostly collapsed, at least as far as the west is concerned. The eastern coastal cities and the Sea Barons, and North Province, conduct most of the surviving trade. Now, most people simply grow enough for themselves.

## Trade and Transport

Trade within Aerdy also has sharply declined. Once, the great rivers of Aerdy and the *dirawaen* roads provided superb highways for merchants to travel with great wagon convoys and merchant vessels ranging from long, slow barges hauled by horses to smaller sailing vessels (coasters being the most common sort employed).

Metals, woods, silks, salt, spices, and more were ferried around the kingdom in great quantities.

Nowadays, few merchants venture forth in this way. For one thing, importing goods has declined sharply. Also, the risks of doing so are simply too great. Even if a merchant hires a hundred men-at-arms to protect his goods, he may run into a marauding army of thousands of men or orcs only too ready and able to overwhelm such protection—that is, if the men he has hired don't slit his throat and steal what he has for themselves.

Ordinary people don't trade much either. Leaving home with goods to sell makes one a target and leaves one's home undefended. Then again, most people don't raise surplus produce; tithes are too high.

Just about the only people in a position to trade are nobles with tithes and armies large enough to fend off bandits and discourage marauding armies from attacking them. Such trade tends to be arranged in advance. Two landholders agree to terms of trade and a meeting place. And barter is at least as important as buying and selling. Rulers need wood, iron, alloys for weapons; stone for fortifications; and the luxuries they once had in abundance and which are now so difficult to obtain. The surrender of the Lords of the Isles to the Scarlet Brotherhood, cutting off imports of spices, silks and the like, make luxuries hard to come by.

Still, some trade continues. It is mostly restricted to the major waterways of the lands, and also to the *dirawaen* roads, for a special reason in the latter case. When Schandor framed the Aerdy legal system, part of the code was a duty laid upon landholders along these roads to provide secure accommodations at regular intervals for the traveling judges of the sessions. As a result, a network of fortified coaching inns sprang up along these major highways.

Since judges visited them rarely, the innkeepers obviously needed other custom—and the traveling merchants saw the attraction of stopping over at such secure places. Hence, as he intended, Schandor's legal maneuver stimulated trade. Some of these fortified inns still stand, and the few merchants still traveling the lands usually plan their travel routes to be sure of spending the night at them.

In game play, if movement rates and the like need to be computed, the following rules can be used. The navigability of rivers is documented in *From The Ashes*, of course. On roads, the *dirawaen* roads are still in excellent repair and have a multiplier of 0.4 for movement cost (this does not change with the weather, either).

Other primary roads are in fair repair but no better; the multiplier for movement cost here is 0.5. Secondary roads and trails have a multiplier of 0.6, but if wagons or similar transport is being used, there is a 1 in 6 chance per 10-mile stretch of road of a major obstacle such as large potholes being encountered.

Along most of the *dirawaen* roads there used to be toll stations at 10-mile intervals, where the following tolls were levied. Merchants conducting a great deal of trade could buy seasonal exemptions from local landholders for a negotiated fee.

For each wagon, 2 sp

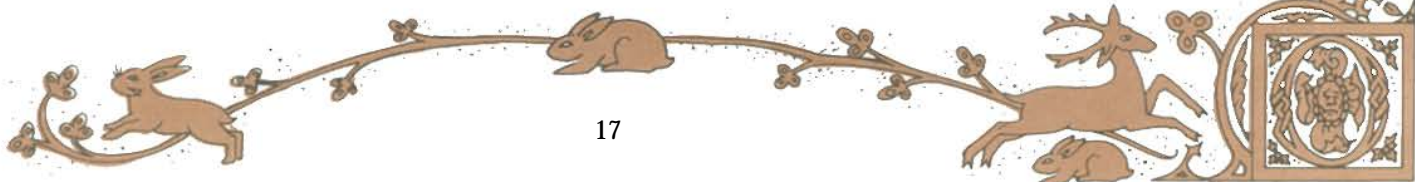
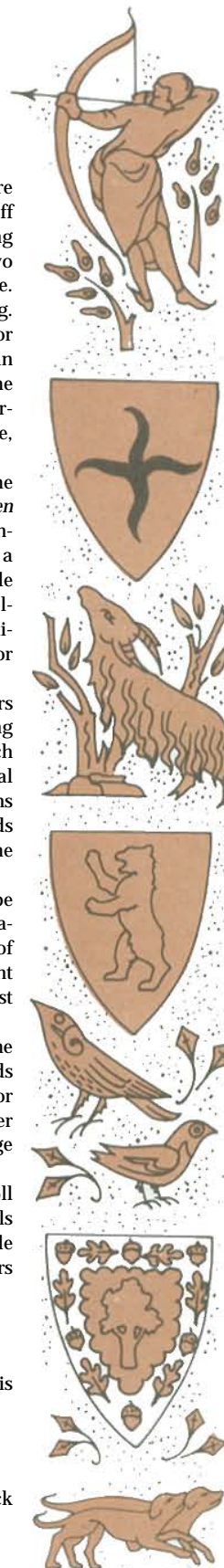
For each horse or other beast of burden, 4 cp

For each licensed guildman or merchant with his goods, 1 sp

For each freeman, 2 cp (peasants don't count)

For each "knight or goodman," 1 sp

The last quaint term applies to anyone on horseback





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who looked like an adventurer, squire, page or the like. This was subject to the discretion of the tollmen. Each toll station was typically manned by one sergeant-at-arms (F3) with 1d4+4 militia (F1, with a 10% chance for each to be a F2), wearing chain mail armor and carrying short bow, halberd, broadsword, net, and shield. The toll stations themselves usually comprised no more than a couple of wooden cabins; 25% had 1d4+1 war dogs in addition to the soldiers.

Nowadays, most toll stations are abandoned or else occupied by bandits and ambushers or desperados who will try to extract whatever they think they can get from anyone passing through. However, in some lands—which have a gazetteer summary entry for "rulership" as medium or higher—the toll stations are still manned normally and the charges above apply, plus a surcharge of 10-100% as the DM determines.

In other lands, where control has broken down, the DM may determine as he wishes how toll stations are manned, or else use a simple D6 roll: 1-4, abandoned; 5, occupied by bandits/ambushers; 6, occupied by the original toll collectors.

## What Does It Cost?

Each gazetteer chapter has a "cost Multiplier" in its summary (see the following chapter). Prices for items vary wildly with supply and demand. See those individual entries for changes to standard Player's Handbook prices for goods and items.

## Tithes and Taxes

There are not tax or tithe ratings in the gazetteers, simply because this is unnecessary. PCs won't be living in these lands, although they may fall foul of special or unique taxes specified in some lands (tolls, etc., have already been noted).

Almost everywhere, taxes and tithes are high, and rulers extract all they can get, unless noted otherwise. Still, there is much variation between lands. The old system of taxes is worth understanding, not least because the House of Naelax wove their cunning into this as they did into everything else in affairs of state.

The taxation system of the Great Kingdom had many of the elements found in other nations once under its control. Each landowner had to pay a set of taxes and tithes to the crown, based upon the extent and richness of his lands. The chancellors of the overking inspected estates and holdings every seven years to determine these taxes. These monies were then used to maintain the imperial army and navy, to support the expenses of the crown in Rauxes, and for purposes such as magical espionage, maintaining a network of spies abroad, and the like. Information gained from spies, in theory, was made available to those nobles who needed to know.

In turn, landowners received taxes and tithes from their liegemen and their own peasants and serfs. Their liegemen also extracted such taxes to pay their lords, of course. In towns and cities, taxes were raised in standard ways—hearth taxes on stone houses, artisan licenses, guild membership fees, freesword taxes on mercenaries, and more.

Travel taxes—on tolls along the *dirawaen* roads, and on import and export of goods—were generally low. They were split between the crown and the local landholders, with most going to the landholders. The overking had the right to levy special taxes for rebuilding any city in the kingdom struck by disasters, such as floods or fire. Too, he could raise taxes to cover the costs of warfare and recruitment of mercenary armies.

The full details do not concern us here, since—as noted—what tax collection comes down to now is how much can be extracted. However, some tax changes which were made by the House of Naelax deserve special attention.

First, the Naelax overkings tended to reduce land taxes on nobles because they had revenues from "royal trust" lands. This made them popular with landholders—or, more likely, stopped them from becoming too unpopular too quickly.

Second, they balanced this by using taxation as a way of keeping nobles in check. The simplest example of this is the Castle Tax introduced by Ivid I in CY 486. Outside of "strategic" areas bordering on other states, a tax on stone castles and keeps was introduced. This was a small payment for existing fortifications, but it was a much heavier financial burden for those with new constructions.

The tax was justified as a way of paying for new castles in North Province, where it could be claimed that they were needed to protect the electrum mines of Bellport from humanoid attacks. Of course, such castles were built in lands mostly owned by Naelax nobles.

The effect elsewhere, however, was to make landholders refrain from building stone castles of their own—which would have been the most effective constructions for resisting any siege initiated by forces of the overking bent on appropriating lands and placing them in "royal trust."

Ivid made sure that his noble subjects' ability to resist his own troops suffered as a consequence of his new tax. Again, it was some while—too long—before this ruse was seen through. By that time, the tax had been in effect for a while and the weight of tradition could be said to be behind it. It is still on the statute books in Rauxes. However, certain nobles did find ways to circumvent it, as the bizarre Sand Castle of Rinloru, the Coral Towers of Winetha, and other strange constructions of Aerdy show.

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## Coinage of the Realm

All lands of Aerdy use the standard AD&D® game conversion rate for coinage of different kinds. However, different provinces mint their own, slightly varying, coins.

The imperial currency minted in Rauxes is still accepted throughout Aerdy, in as much as any coinage is. The coins used are:

**Platinum Orb:** a rectangular, flat disc with the image of the Orb of Rax on both sides.

**Gold Ivid:** a circular coin with a milled edge, bearing the face of Ivid V on one side and the staff, orb and crown of the overking on the reverse.

**Electrum Noble, Silver Penny, Copper Common:** these are all circular coins without milled edges, bearing the heraldic symbol of the Great Kingdom on one side and that of the House of Naelax on the other.

The same coins are used in South Province, but the design differences are that the Platinum Orb has the symbol of the Great Kingdom on one side; the Gold Ivid has that symbol instead of that of the regalia of the overking; and the other coins have the boar's-head symbol of South Province rather than that of the House of Naelax.

In North Province, coins are the same as in South Province, save that the draconic shield symbol of that province replaces that of South Province on coins.

Old Medegian coins show the face of the Censor of Medegia on one side and the shield designs of Medegia and the Great Kingdom on the reverse. Here, the gold coin was known stubbornly as a "Gold Crown" and not a Gold Ivid as elsewhere.

Foreign coinage (provincial coinage is not regarded as foreign) is not accepted in Aerdy outside of the eastern fringe lands where trade is still conducted with foreign nations, such as the Twin Cities, Rel Astra, Ountsy, etc. Also, it is accepted in a few parts of Ahlissa where piracy brings foreign gold into the land. In lands where such coin is accepted, it is devalued by 5-20% (5x1d4) for the purpose of purchasing goods or exchange for Aerdy coin. The one exception is the Sea Barons, who accept foreign coins with an exchange penalty of only 2%.

In some areas of Aerdy coinage is not accepted at all, or goods are scarce and expensive; the gazetteer chapters give details.

## Power in the Land

The royal houses already have been considered, of course, and the gazetteer chapters give details for individual lands within Aerdy. Here, an overview of the power held by priesthoods, fiends, merchants and guilds, mages and sages, special and secretive power factions, and the like is given.

## The Military

During the rule of the House of Naelax, large standing armies have been maintained. This was primarily due to the desire on the part of North and South Provinces, and Medegia, to have security for their independence.

Of course, it was natural for the overking to respond in kind, and the one area where the overking undoubtedly had supremacy was naval (the Sea Barons being under Ivid's control, unenthusiastically). Most of these armies had, in fact, relatively little to do most of the time outside of North Province, where the need to secure the Bone March and to maintain patrols and mount skirmish raids after its fall to humanoids in CY 563 kept troops busy.

Elsewhere, the Grandwood and Lone Heath were not attacked by Medegian armies, which were simply defensive for the most part. However, the Adri was raided by imperial armies of increasingly humanoid makeup. Ivid's imperial armies also periodically stormed lands to take them into "royal trust."

In most lands, though, without any wars, the armies grew ill-disciplined and poorly-trained.

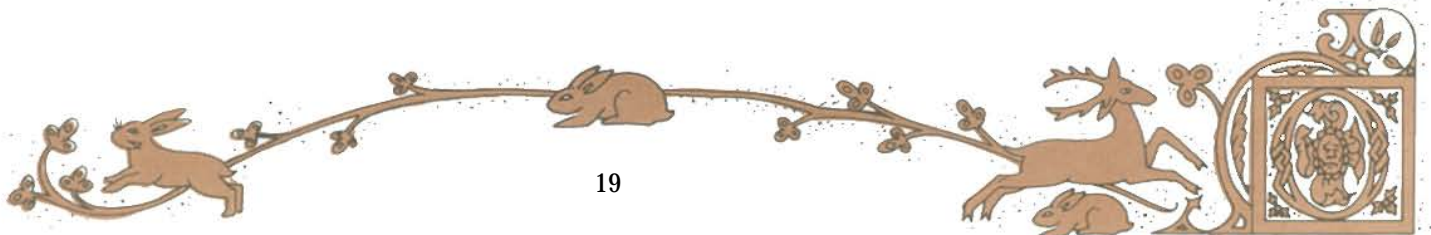
Organizationally, the overking had his own imperial armies which could, in theory, be strengthened by calling upon a number of additional troops from each land—including the North and South Provinces and Medegia—whenever the overking so decreed. This principle stretched down the line; princes with large landholdings would often appoint liegemen purely on the grounds that those liegemen had strong militia the prince could call upon when needed (or which acted purely as a deterrent to other princes eyeing up the lands).

In practice, however, the overking only could call upon extra armies from his nobles to the extent that he could persuade or cow them into supplying—as Ivid V found out in the Greyhawk Wars.

The final chapter of this book gives details of the major armies in Aerdy at this time; their troop numbers, equipment, morale and more. Individual gazetteer chapters also describe any unusual, elite, or otherwise special military units, such as the Companion Guard in Rauxes. In this initial overview, we can take a look at the politics of the military.

Aerdy rulers always have been careful to ensure that senior military commanders do not acquire too much political power. In theory, of course, the overking himself is supreme commander of all his armies and military forces. The imperial army has also always avoided having any landholding princes of real note among its generals and marshals. This was done simply to reduce the possibility of any military coup.

However, the House of Naelax introduced a distinctly political quality to the senior commanders in two ways. First, it favored its own scions of Naelax as commanding officers to ensure loyalty. Second, it favored minor,







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powerful princelings who had some grudge with members of their own house.

Disinherited princes, princes left with little or no land, or poor princes not supported by their richer siblings were the usual candidates. This allowed the House of Naelax to claim that commands were fairly spread around different royal houses (disguising their own nepotism). Actually, they made sure that other houses were divided, rendering major princes insecure and vulnerable. This prevented the princes from offering a serious challenge to the rule of Naelax.

These minor princes were almost always incompetent and weak commanders, so that the armies they nominally led were commanded in effect by their advisers and junior officers—who tended to be hand-picked by Ivid to serve his interests. This worked well for Naelax in some ways, but it also generated a growing contempt for the senior officers among the more able junior and middling officers and even veteran troops of the imperial armies. This, in turn, made it more likely that they would desert the overking and mutiny from sheer disillusion when the opportunity came.

The humanoid armies increasingly recruited in North Province by the overking were always commanded by Ivid himself. On the ground, priests of Hextor or fiend-knights usually controlled day-to-day discipline and operations. Although humanoid armies often have poor morale, the Lawful nature of orcs and the leaders chosen to marshal them made up for that by ensuring that discipline was usually good. That was before the Iron Schism, of course, but more on that shortly.

## Church Armies

A special mention must be made of armies maintained by certain churches and religious orders within Aerdy. This always has been a strong tradition with martial faiths (Heironeous, Hextor, etc.). Outside of Aerdy, it is seen in its strongest development in the Theocracy of the Pale, for centuries part of the Great Kingdom.

Such armies were paid for by tithes and taxes levied by priests, who were themselves landholders, especially in Medegia. Or they were paid for from monies given by other landholders to the church.

The independence of Nyronnd, Urnst, and the Theocracy was pivotal, so far as Aerdy's religious warriors were concerned. Turmoil followed for decades between the crowns and the priesthoods of Heironeous and Pholtus to a lesser extent. The autonomy of the governments caused a great rush of exiles. Powerful men defected to the Theocracy, Urnst, Nyronnd, and Almor, even to Furyondy, often taking their armies with them. This left the priesthood of Hextor in a position of unchallenged supremacy among the martial faiths.

There are now few church armies left intact in

Aerdy—Medegian armies having been decimated by the overking's destruction of that land. Where they do exist, however, they are of superior quality and morale. Few of them are actually priests, paladins, or ardent followers of the faith. But they tend to have fair to good equipment, and they know that either combat magic or magical healing are routinely on hand, which helps their morale.

## Priesthoods

It must be kept in mind that Aerdy is vast. It thus supported a multiplicity of faiths. The general drift toward evil has been slow and cumulative, and while evil priesthoods are in the ascendant, it has not always been so. Neither is it the case that, even today, good or neutral aligned priesthoods do not have any influence.

Among the peasants, most pay some minor respects to Beory, Oerth Mother. This is natural for an agricultural people. A small invocation will be offered when crops are planted, and some small portion set aside ("Beory's plate") at Richfest. However, there are few priests of Beory. This has never been a "political" or martial priesthood, and the faith survives almost as folklore rather than in formal worship and priestly practice. Ordinary folk also propitiate evil deities, notably Nerull and Incabulos, in minor rites designed to ward off disease and to beg free passage for departing souls of the dead.

Historically, the one great tension between Aerdi priesthoods is between Heironeous and Hextor. During the great expansionist drive, this rivalry was regarded as healthy. Both sides struggled to be pre-eminent in the drive for glory and dominion. Wise rulers kept the priests well apart from each other. These Lawful priesthoods maintained zeal, discipline, and trained soldiers well.

However, after the Turmoil between Crowns, priests of Heironeous have become few and far between. Most emigrated westward, others found themselves marginalized to fringe areas, often dependent on the support of a minor local ruler—perhaps for personal or historical reasons. The marginalization of this priesthood was a catalyst in accelerating Aerdy's drift to evil.

Pre-war, only three priesthoods were of importance within Aerdy; those of Pholtus, Zilchus, and Hextor. Pholtus priests continued to have influence among royal houses because of their role as scholars, keepers of archives, wise men, and advisers. The junior priests formed the bulk of local magistrates.

However, tensions grew and after the denunciation of Ivid V by the patriarch of Pholtus in Rauxes, Ivid ordered a purge of Pholtus's priesthood. Most local rulers went along with this for the simple reason that this allowed them to seize church lands and property and enrich themselves.

The more lenient allowed the priests to escape with their lives. Most of these priests fled to the Theocracy or

# Powers and Factions

Urnst, and a few to the Iron League nations.

Very few rulers dared to oppose Ivid in this matter; the overking had played the sedition-and-treason card, and this was powerful in its effect. The priesthood of Pholtus is decimated now, with only a handful of its senior priests left.

Priests of Zilchus are left as the only non-evil priesthood of real note. They always have played a vital role in the economy of Aerdy, forming the bulk of the tax gatherers, chancellors, and advisers to the overking on trade and monies. In return, the priesthood has grown wealthy, with many opulent buildings and no few small landholdings of its own. Then again, the richer elements of the merchant classes, especially merchant princes, have always allied with this priesthood. To have purged it would have meant decimating the finances of the imperial court.

Even Ivid was not mad enough to do this; he needed money for his great war against Nyrond. Thus, until very recently, this priesthood has stayed safe.

However, it is an ill-disguised secret that Zilchus priests tend to back the House of Darmen in their aim of forming the next ruling royal house. The House of Darmen, with its many merchant princes, has always courted this priesthood and very recently Patriarch Lassaren was tipped off by Prince Xavener of Darmen that an attempt might be made on his life by agents of Ivid.

The overking, Xavener said, was suspicious of the patriarch and might move to act against him.

Xavener offered Lassaren safe refuge in Kalstrand, which the patriarch readily accepted. A carefully disguised double left in Rauxes was indeed assassinated a week or so later. Some say Xavener himself had the double killed and laid the blame on the overking, but then those who say that tend to be men in the service of Xavener's rivals. Still, Lassaren finds himself almost a prisoner in Kalstrand. Treated with deference and living in utter luxury, Xavener presses on Lassaren the absolute need for security. The priest is not free to leave.

Thus, while the priesthood of Zilchus does not support Ivid, being infuriated by the promotion of "Baalzy"—a direct affront to their role—they are uncertain of how openly to act against him. Too, they are uncertain whether Xavener is the right man to replace him.

The fiery Matriarch Schleretha of Zelradton, in particular, opposes Xavener's suit very strongly. Many priests of Zilchus are concerned that Lassaren may become only a pawn of Xavener and now quietly regard Schleretha as the real, supreme authority.

## The Priesthood of Hextor

This priesthood has a special place for several reasons. First, it is the single most powerful in the land. Second, it

played a major role in the creation of the animuses. In addition, it is the only priesthood left which Ivid deals with day-to-day. However, its power is hardly unconstrained.

The House of Naelax was strongly supported by Hextor's priests during the Turmoil between Crowns. They knew an evil cause when they saw it, and they put their own church armies firmly behind Ivid I.

In return, when the civil war was over, Ivid made a number of ceremonial appointments elevating the priesthood and made Patriarch-General Izvestian his court priest. He also made sure the priesthood didn't get too big for its boots.

Ivid enthusiastically promoted the priesthood to command of major imperial armies such as the Black Legion, the Glorioles Army, and others. But he did this very cunningly. In some cases he appointed priests to command armies where the large majority of officers had no liking for them, as in the case of the Glorioles Army. This kept the priests insecure about their authority. Second, he integrated Hextor's own church armies into imperial units; nominally as elite troops or special troops, but always in a small minority, again making the priests feel insecure.

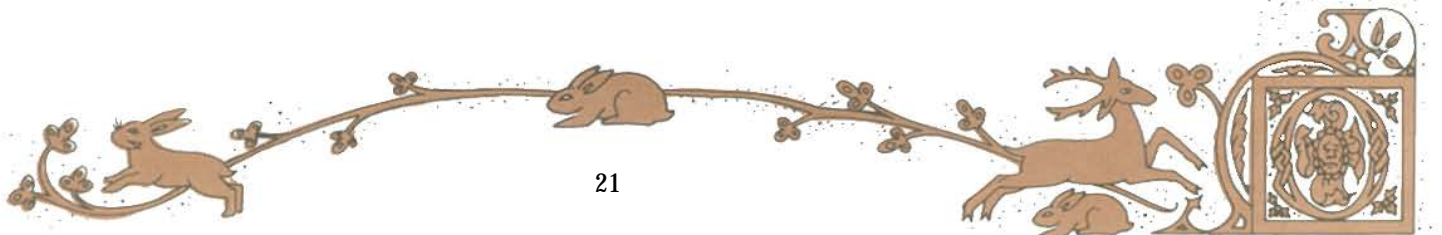
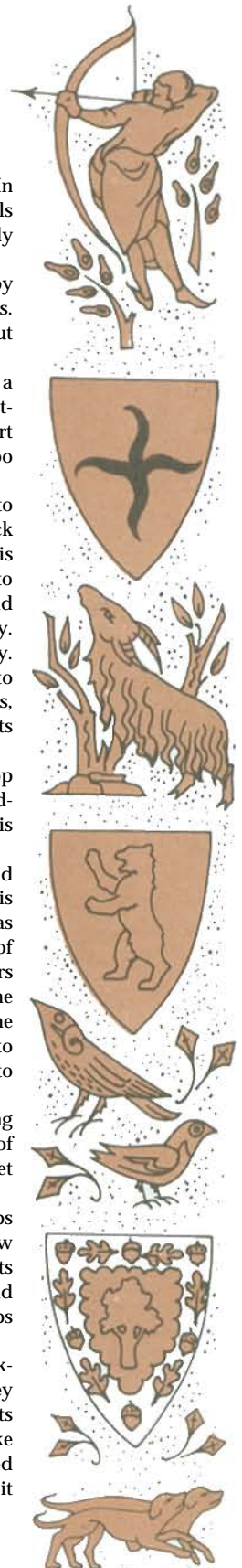
Since this often involved sending large imperial troop units to "ally with" church armies on the few landholdings the church of Hextor owned, he made sure that his armies occupied their lands.

Then again, Ivid decreed that the church armies should be supported by the royal purse. It might appear that this was a generous provision. What it meant in effect was that Ivid became their paymaster. Especially in the case of humanoid troops, it often seemed to happen that couriers bearing wages suffered unfortunate accidents along the way so that the troops were paid only very late. Or, the couriers bearing letters of instruction to local rulers to hand over some of the imperial tithe and tax monies to the priests were badly delayed.

On the other hand, the priests were always paid using magical teleportation devices for sending small sums of gold. Thus, the troops learned that they didn't always get paid, but the priests did.

In a particularly cunning twist to make sure the troops learned this, Ivid I kept the initial minting of the new Gold Ivid at a low level for some years—and the priests were always paid with these new coins, as anyone could readily see when the priests spent any of it. So the troops knew well that the priests had got paid by the overking!

Naturally enough, the troops rarely blamed the overking (since, after all, the priests got his money). But they blamed their priestly leaders, often believing the priests were stealing the army wages. Ivid knew how to make sure that the priesthood never got the whole-hearted support of their men. Thus, the priests of Hextor found it difficult to maintain control and discipline.





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To make matters worse, spies and agents of the overking kept careful watch on the actions of this priesthood. The priests, lacking detection and subtler magic, were not well-equipped to uncover such agents.

The crafty Naelax overkings kept this situation in existence for many decades, with one twist and turn after another keeping the Hextor priesthood firmly under their thumbs. When the Greyhawk wars came, however, the overking truly needed the support of the priests.

Ivid neglected his usual intriguing for the purpose of giving with one hand and craftily undermining with the other. And under Patriarch-General Pyrannden the priesthood waxed powerful. Ivid must have felt utterly betrayed when he called upon Medegia for aid during the Greyhawk wars and found that the chief censor refused him—with the backing of the Krennden, Patriarch of Hextor in Rel Astra, the nominal capital city of Medegia. Ivid has had his revenge on the Censor, of course, but the patriarch fled to the safety of the north-east coast.

What has happened subsequently is almost without precedent within this priesthood. Pyrannden has stood by Ivid. However, Krennden has pronounced the overking insane and renounced his sacred guardianship of the malachite throne on account of that.

There is an Iron Schism within the priesthood of Hextor. Krennden is charismatic and senior enough, and has the backing of sufficient animus rulers who hate the overking and will support almost anyone opposing him. Because of that, he has the following of many of Hextor's priests outside of the Naelax lands. Krennden keeps on the move, to avoid the assassins and death squads Ivid sends to deal with him. And he has enough local rulers willing to keep him secure for a short time to be a genuine menace.

Currently he is in Delaric, where he has shown signs of settling down and establishing a power base to challenge the current Patriarch-General; Delaric's ruler Montand had best beware lest this should invite angry reprisal from Ivid.

Finally, while there are no other priesthoods of political importance, some are important in special areas—such as the faith of Obad-hai in the forests, and Trithereon's angry faith in the Lone Heath and Grandwood. Gazetteer chapters, especially those covering the Adri, Grandwood, and Lone Heath, give more details about this. The only remaining priesthood which has a general following among the ordinary people (other than Beory) is that of St. Cuthbert. However, this priesthood—very much a rustic, rural faith here—has been badly affected by assassins and evil rulers, and it survives only in a few lands.

## Fiends

There is ample reason the malachite throne is known as the "Fiend-seeing Throne." The throne which the Naelax

overkings have ascended was crafted between 443 and 446 CY from a great crystal chunk found in the Cauldron of Night. The throne itself, fashioned by mages and priests, has magical properties (see the chapter on Rauxes). Its abilities include providing a gate to the Nine Hells.

Since Prince Ivid himself was an accomplished mage who had conversed with fiends and considered long and hard how to deal with them and use them for his own ends, when he ascended to the throne it was a perfect match. A complex web of intrigues has spread out, with the hunched madman on his throne firmly ensconced in the center.

## The House of Naelax and Baatezu

The House of Naelax has a history of at least two centuries of dealing with fiends. Initially, this was simply individual mages within the house summoning lesser and least fiends and using them for petty services. However, it was Ivid's father, Ivenzen, who took a fatal step forward from that minor dabbling.

Ivenzen dealt with both tanar'ri and baatezu as his needs dictated, but after offending a minor tanar'ri Lord he concentrated on dealings with baatezu. This came to the attention of a pit fiend, Zuchanx, who alerted his own master, Baalzephon, to the situation.

Baalzephon, one of the eight greatest baatezu of Nesses, mulled this over for a decade or so. Baalzephon had little direct interest in humanity, but he was increasingly aware that human mages could be powerful, and enslaving or allying with them might prove useful in the Blood War against the tanar'ri.

The problem, of course, was that baatezu cannot gate to the Prime Material plane, severely restricting their scope for action. However, Baalzephon bided his time and, when Ivenzen's house wizard cast a *gate* spell for planar travel purposes, Baalzephon expended powerful energies to warp the spell and use it to appear before Ivenzen. Casually dismembering the body of the stunned wizard in his powerful claws, Baalzephon offered a pact to Ivenzen.

Put simply, Baalzephon guided Ivenzen's men to the Cauldron of Night and instructed the priests and wizards how to fashion the malachite throne. The baatezu offered diabolic aid in the form of spinagon and barbazu troops for the House of Naelax. Further, it gave the House of Naelax dark magical artifacts which the overking and his mages hold to this day. (Several are described in the following chapter.)

In return, Baalzephon asked for two things. First, the House of Naelax had to agree to cease all dealings with tanar'ri—except for enslaving them and banishing them. Second, Baalzephon graciously demanded the souls of Ivenzen's heirs and descendants for 888 years—should

# Powers and Factions

they rule from the malachite throne.

A grim smile from the baatezu held the promise that Naelax would rule as overkings; else, the baatezu would gain nothing from the pact. Ivenzen, thinking of himself as the next overking, could hardly wait to offer little Prince Ivid up to the towering fiend who stood before him. With the blood hardly dry on the contract, Baalzephon returned to Nessus and waited.

What has happened since cannot be simply explained. Powerful magical resonances have been created by the conjunction of the malachite throne, the gating, the magic of baatezu, the spellcraft of the Naelax overkings and their mages, and the diabolic artifacts Ivenzen was granted. The insanity of the overkings has both contributed to, and been reinforced by, the complex magical effects created by these conjunctions and resonances.

Ivid V's current wasting disease is also surely the product of these same complex, fell magical forces. A monster has been created which has passed out of the control either of the Naelax mages and overkings, or even the baatezu themselves.

Baalzephon certainly doesn't wish to see Ivid V die from his disease; Ivid's continued reign gives the fiend access to Oerthly power and resources, and prestige among his fellow diabolic rulers in Nessus. The extraplanar lore supplied to Baalzephon by the overking's sages and mages has also been very useful in the Blood War.

Yet, even this immensely powerful fiend seems unable to prevent the degeneration of the overking, even with Karoolck, his mage-pawn, virtually in control of the imperial court.

## Duke Szeffrin and Pazrael

Duke Szeffrin, ruler of the Almorian lands, is the other main power player with a firm alliance with a fiend of great power. The Abyssal Lord Pazrael (documented in Iuz The Evil and also noted in the Almor chapter here) lends strength and magic to Szeffrin. Plus, tanar'ri in his service use the gate at Onyxgate to enter the Prime Material plane.

Szeffrin plots the destruction of Ivid, in revenge for his conversion to an animus. And knowing of the overking's alliance with baatezu, an association with tanar'ri to oppose him is ideal.

Pazrael's game is more complex.

This Abyssal Lord has an alliance with Iuz, not the least because Pazrael is very wary of Graz'zt, Iuz's tanar'ri father. But Pazrael also has the long-term goal of supplanting Iuz as a ruler on Oerth.

What Pazrael is doing in Szeffrin's domain is simple; he is testing magical strength on a scale which he doesn't want to offer to Iuz. Pazrael wants to see how his most mighty magics work in Almor, to "field test" them for the day when he can act against Iuz. Iuz knows this, and

sends spies to watch over events in Almor. This makes for some intriguing complications in the politics of Oerth and the Abyss.

## Other Fiendish Alliances

No other rulers or powerful men within Aerdy have alliances with such mighty fiends, but many of them have fiends in their service, usually lesser or least fiends which swell the ranks of armies.

There are also some unusual, exceptional cases—such as the fiend-sage of Rel Astra—which are described in individual gazetteer chapters. These fiends are usually dilettantes and mavericks, and their actions do not link Oerth to any greater scheme of things in the Blood War.

## Baatezu and the Priesthood of Hextor

The priesthood of Hextor is the pre-eminent Lawful Evil one in Aerdy, and one might expect that they would be involved in many dealings with the equally Lawful Evil baatezu. However, matters are not so simple. Hextor himself has his own dwelling on Acheron, not in the Nine Hells. Further, priests of Hextor cannot use the *gate* spell. Thus, the alliance is not so firm.

Indeed, there is sometimes a rivalry between the two—and sometimes an alliance. Matters can depend upon the attitude of the patriarch-general of the time, and the baatezu being dealt with. A senior priest of Hextor might deal amicably enough with a lesser baatezu, but if confronted by an arrogant pit fiend the priest could have an entirely different view.

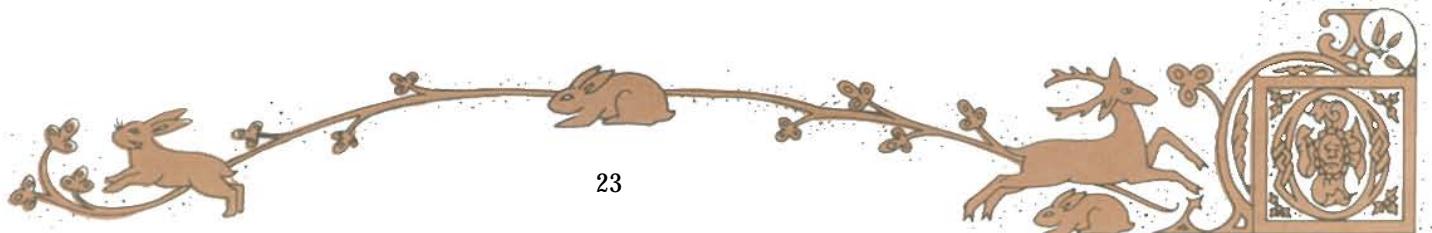
The one instance of real note in which Hextor's priesthood and the baatezu have co-operated is in the creation of animuses; see the following chapter on Rauxes.

## Mages and Sages

The position of mages in Aerdy is an important one. There are fewer independent mages here than elsewhere. Education is mostly restricted to the children of privileged families, and thus many mages are nobles and landholders and have alliances within their royal houses. Also, landholders generally do their best to recruit and maintain mages within their households. The Aerdi have too strong a recollection of the importance of mages in warfare, and they struggle to make sure they have some wizards of their own.

Given the increasing strife of the Great Kingdom under the House of Naelax, local rulers will go to some lengths to "persuade" mages to join their service.

Also, wizards of Aerdy tend to specialize in aggressive magic, being specialist invokers, conjurers, and necromancers. Obviously, this is not always so. However, the long history of combat mages tends to channel both the training of apprentices. Obscure, arcane, and subtle





# Powers and Factions

magic—the arts and crafts of the illusionist or the enchanter—are not so highly regarded. Expert diviners are an exception, since they are valued as spies.

One consequence of all this is that sagacious and learned societies of wizards are very few and far between in Aerdy. This is not the place to come if one seeks wizards steeped in arcane lore.

Likewise, sages tend to specialize in more pragmatic areas of research. This is exemplified by an exchange between a naive student attending the University of Rauxes, who asked a friendly-looking old sage who was the resident expert on myconids and intelligent fungal life. The sage's reply was, "Stuff fungi! I've got a new explosive powder to test. Get out of my way." Sages in Aerdy cities will be more likely than usual (add 10-20% to Dungeon Master's Guide Table 61, page 107) to have the following fields of study as areas of expertise: Alchemy, Astrology, Chemistry, Cryptography, Engineering, and Geology. They are less likely (subtract 5-20% from same table) to have the following as areas of expertise: Art, Metaphysics (save for the Nine Hells), Music, Myconology, Philosophy, and Sociology.

There are no sage groups akin to the Sagacious Society of Nyrond in Aerdy.

## Guilds

The one non-adventuring guild which has a truly dominant role is the Royal Guild of Merchants of Aerdy. This group is dominated by the Royal House of Darmen under its patron, Prince Xavener. As part of the agreement of proclamation of Ivid I as overking, House Darmen was paid off for its support of Naelax by being granted a royal writ to regulate all guilds of a commercial nature—this means virtually regulating everyone in practice throughout the Great Kingdom.

Though this royal writ did not specifically exclude either North or South Province or Medegia, it could not be enforced there. So in those lands the Royal Guild of Merchants had to develop its influence more subtly and with greater wiles. But, with the backing of the priesthood of Zilchus, it was fairly successful at doing exactly that.

The Royal Guild of Merchants pays a hefty annual tax to the overking. In return it licenses all trade and craft guilds, which in turn regulate their own affairs. Guilds with small memberships, specialist areas of operation, or special and unusual requirements, such as literacy, have the strongest control over their internal regulation.

These Guilds are very rarely powerful, simply because most of Aerdy's people live off the land as peasants or fishermen. However, they do act as a stabilizing factor in Aerdy today. Cohesive guilds look after their own, and if one furrier, for example, has his house burned by looters, other members of his guild will do something to help,

such as give the furrier money, offer him accommodations, and provide other aid. In return, they might ask to work in their shop or place of business.

The Royal Guild is politically powerful through its monopoly of commercial licensing, its alliance with the priesthood of Zilchus, and its merchant-prince membership, which has major landholdings. Most of the guild currently supports Xavener's bid for rulership, and they oppose Ivid by passive resistance means, such as channeling resources away from what areas of influence are left to the overking. However, some of the guild supports other bids for the crown, and this powerful group is as schism-ridden as other associations in Aerdy.

## Secret Societies

There are only two secret societies which have some degree of influence. Midnight Darkness and The Web may not be strong in numbers, but they strike fear into the heart of anyone crossing them.

### Midnight Darkness

This is an evil vigilante group which exists to strike down powerful or influential non-evil men and women within Aerdy. Their prime targets are priests, especially those of Pholtus and St. Cuthbert.

The organization is generally thought to be in the service of Nerull, the Reaper, and their aim of bringing death to servants of good is fully in accord with that general view. Indeed, priests of Nerull are among their number, and the second echelon, the preceptors, is almost exclusively of that brethren.

Since the cult is only believed to have been active for 30 years, and its killings only linked to it for many fewer, no man has been able to collect a great deal of information about it.

The head of this hierarchical cult, a man known simply as "Hidden Sickle" to the preceptors, is actually a priest of Tharizdun, one Karnquiza. His "hidden agenda" is described in his entry in the **South Province** chapter. In brief, he is a servant of the Scarlet Brotherhood. While this is not especially surprising, what is perhaps startling is that the preceptors haven't yet realized this.

This continuing ignorance suggests that, at the very least, The Reaper himself is happy to go along with this charade.

Midnight Darkness leaves a calling card behind when it has disposed of a victim. Almost always, a poisoned dagger is left jutting out from between the shoulder-blades of a victim (poison is the usual form of dispatch, but is not always used for the actual killing). Tied around the handle of the dagger is a strip of ragged black cloth which itself is soaked in an alkaloid contact poison (type N) which renders the cloth potentially lethal to handle for

# Powers and Factions

12+d12 days (until the poison degrades).

Midnight Darkness does not have many agents in Aerdy. Beyond the four preceptors, there are perhaps a dozen specialist agents (again including a few priests of Nerull). And below them are 20 or so hirelings, junior assassins, and an indeterminate number of hired thugs. They do not use much in the way of wizardry, with priests and thieves dominating their numbers. They have assassinated perhaps 30-50 people a year prior to the Greyhawk wars. But since that time the group has become much more active, and they represent a threat to any servant of Good, wherever he may hide.

The use of disguise, magical and mundane, and magical items allowing teleportation for swift travel and despatch of their victims, are hallmarks of their operations.

## The Web

This simple and unimaginative name is that given by Ivid III to a network of spies, agents, and assassins in his service.

The simple name is almost a double-bluff; the overkings have tended to favor flamboyant, clichéd names for their personal servitors (Fiend-Knights of Doom, for example). The Web was set up under the aegis of the then-court wizard, Belerak the Wizeden, to strengthen the overking's grip on the other royal houses of Aerdy.

Given such a goal, these agents were organized using a cell structure, so that active cells did not know where their orders came from, nor who their source of instruction was. This, obviously, allowed the overking to deny any knowledge of them if they should be apprehended (and he usually took steps to make sure that cells appeared to be linked to other nobles who were rivals of the target the cell was acting against).

This is sound strategy, but it has one central pitfall. Cells can become autonomous and out of control. Since, over the coming decades, creatures of Chaotic Evil alignment came increasingly to fill the ranks of the web, the problems with this organization grew greater. Now the situation is one of near-complete anarchy.

The old spymaster of the Web, Remaelak, was recently executed for treason. His lieutenants in Rauxes have either suffered the same fate, or else fled the capital. In several major cities of Aerdy, Web spies and agents have been left without instructions or leadership as a result,

and have thus opted to follow their own instincts.

What makes the Web dangerous is that Web members are routinely equipped with extensive magical protection against detection—*rings of invisibility*, *rings of mind shielding*, *amulets of proof against detection and location* and the like, and also items which prevent their easily being disabled, such as *rings of free action* and magical devices protecting against *polymorphing* and other spells.

They also have extensive supplies of sabotage items, such as poisons, food contaminants, glass spheres of thick toxic syrups which emit vast clouds of poisonous gas when broken, the volatile substance known as firewater (perfect for arson and incendiary attacks), and much more. In the past, these were used for strikes against "economic targets," to lash out against nobles who had offended Ivid.

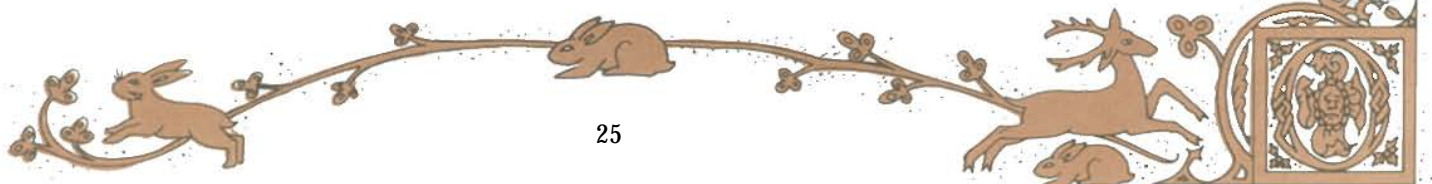
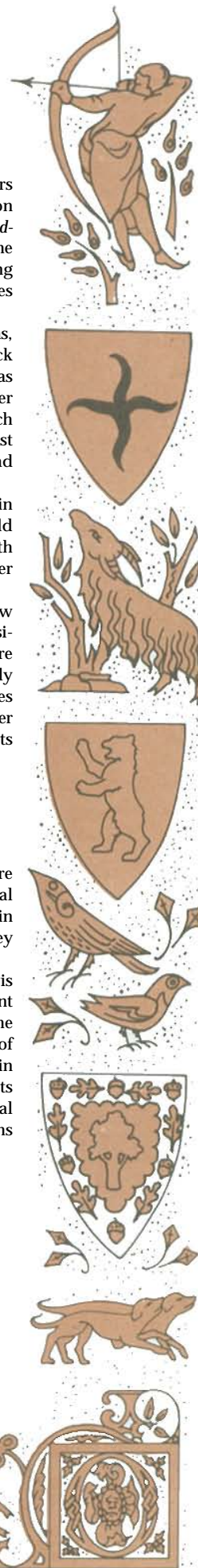
The Web was also used to sniff out "subversives" within Aerdy. Web spies and agents provocateur would sometimes commit acts of sabotage, and then ally with genuinely seditious elements so that they could uncover those who actually did oppose the overking.

However, with so many of the overking's enemies now dead, and those who remain mostly open in their opposition to him, such wiles are hardly necessary. In a bizarre twist, in at least one of Aerdy's cities (Eastfair) virtually all such subversion is actually carried out by Web spies from two different cells. They are unknown to each other and believe that the other cell contains the real terrorists that they must hunt.

## The Great Kingdom and Other Nations

Political dealings between Aerdy and other nations are effectively suspended. Certainly, there are imperial ambassadors at the courts of a few other nations and in Greyhawk City, but it is mutually understood that they no longer speak with any authority.

Only a handful of other nations are important vis a vis the situation in Aerdy. The barbarian states are important because of their raids on North Province and against the Sea Barons. Nyrond is significant because of its fear of Aerdi invasion and its tense standoff with Szeffrin in Almor. The Scarlet Brotherhood already extends its tendrils into southern Aerdy, and the probable initial goals of the Brotherhood are the capture of the Sea Barons and the subversion of South Province.





# The Grand Gazetteer

## Introduction

The map overleaf shows the political divide of the Great Kingdom at the beginning of summer, CY 585. The divisions on this map reflect both formal political claims, and also the realities of division by force, ownership, and other factors.

To take one simple example, area #10 is the area of land currently proclaimed as his fief by Drax the Invulnerable. In actual fact, Drax and his troops mostly remain holed up in Rel Astra. His assertion of sovereignty is purely for staking a claim when the overking finally falls. The reason why the area is, nonetheless, shown as it is on the political map is because a majority of landowners and armies in this area are ready to ally with Drax, so that his claim is not without substance. Do not take these borders as either accurate (the division of the Adri Forest is simply one agreed by the landowners around it) or unchanging. The political map of the Great Kingdom will surely change considerably in the immediate future.

The broad areas shown on the map are those covered in the following gazetteer-style chapters which make up the bulk of this sourcebook. As numbered on the map, they are as follows, with very brief details only at this stage:

1. Rauxes and the Lands of the Overking. Here, Ivid's land claims are not disputed, though he only can effectively control a portion of the lands.

2. North Province. This is largely unchanged from pre-war boundaries and still retains a fair degree of organization and effective rule. It formally seceded from the Great Kingdom at the end of the Greyhawk Wars, but as a major power in the north of the ex-Aerdy lands, it is of major political importance and is hardly unaffected by what happens elsewhere.

3. Twin Cities. The rulers of Rinloru and Winetha have formed a post-war pact, and their claim to these lands is not contested. Powerful magic and great evil dominates the rulers, chaos strides the lands.

4, 5, 6: Naelax Lands. These lands are owned in the main by Naelax princes other than Ivid. Some of these princes still ally with Ivid, most do not.

7. Sea Barons. Unaltered from pre-war boundaries.

8, 9, 10: Free Eastern Cities. Roland and lately Ountsy have followed the example of Rel Astra and proclaimed themselves free cities together with the surrounding lands their rulers claim as fiefdoms.

11. Medegian Lands: Most of Medegia is anarchy, with Pontylver a hellish city of ghosts and madmen. This is a dreadful, insane land of nightmare and terror.

12, 13, 14: Lands of Darmen. Primarily owned by House Darmen, the lands here contain several cities of importance and still have good-sized organized armies. These lands are the major military force in south-central Aerdy. The key power struggles for ascension to the

malachite throne are burgeoning here.

15. South Province. A mage-ruled land, South Province is still strong and has enough elite troops to be a major menace. This is an intrigue-ridden, dangerous land indeed.

16, 17: Western Lands. These lands are a collection largely of petty fiefs where the Houses of Darmen and Cranden share most ownership. If there is anywhere in Aerdy where evil is not triumphant in open terrain, these lands may be that place.

18, 19: Almorian Lands. The powerful Duke Szeffrin has brought many magical horrors and great power to the ruined lands of Almor, though the area south of the Harp, lying eastward from the ruins of Chathold itself, is a nightmare virtually beyond belief—and certainly beyond endurance. Unique menaces and dangers are to be found here.

The Adri Forest, and the Grandwood Forest and Lone Heath, are detailed in additional chapters.

Each following chapter has a summary set of notes for each land, given as follows:

Pop.: Number of human and demihuman adults (humanoids are noted separately; marauding, nomadic humanoids aren't tallied).

Capital: Not all area have capitals. Those which do, have them listed together with a population figure.

Ruler: The effective ruler is always listed here. The titular ruler is also, if he is separate. Some areas have no effective rulers, or have several.

Rulership: This is listed as High, Medium, Low, or Absent—or Variable, if the land has various rulers with different levels of control. The main text gives details of what this means in practice; this single word is just an at-a-glance summary. If Rulership is High, then the major local rulers have loyal armies, a good degree of law enforcement, and so on.

Cost Multiplier: This lists a percentage base price for goods listed in the Player's Handbook. Thus, a figure of "150%" means that, on average, goods cost 50% more than the list price in the handbook. Of course, this does not apply to everything. Seafish are very cheap in Roland or Rel Astra, for example, whatever the general cost multiplier is. The percentage figure is simply a rule of thumb. The DM might also determine scarcity of goods as he wishes, with a simple rule from this cost of multiplier: for every 10% this multiplier is above 100%, there is a 5% chance that a desired item isn't available for at least 1d6 days. Thus, if the general cost multiplier is 200%, any desired item is 50% likely to be unavailable. Don't apply this to food or to very basic items.

Again, this rule is a just a guideline and the DM can amend it as he wishes. In lands where military strife is severe, for example, weapons and armor available will

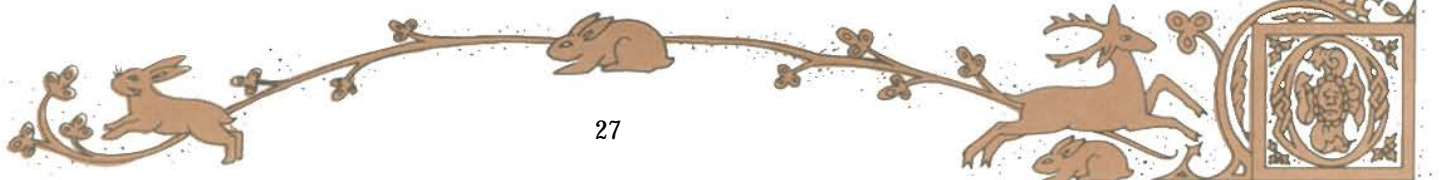
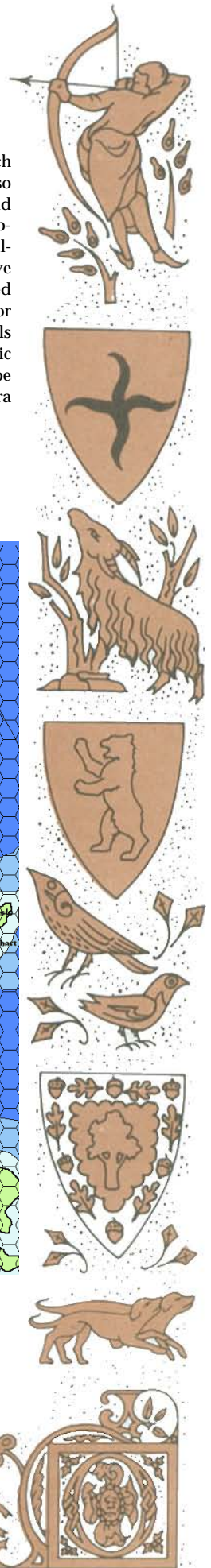
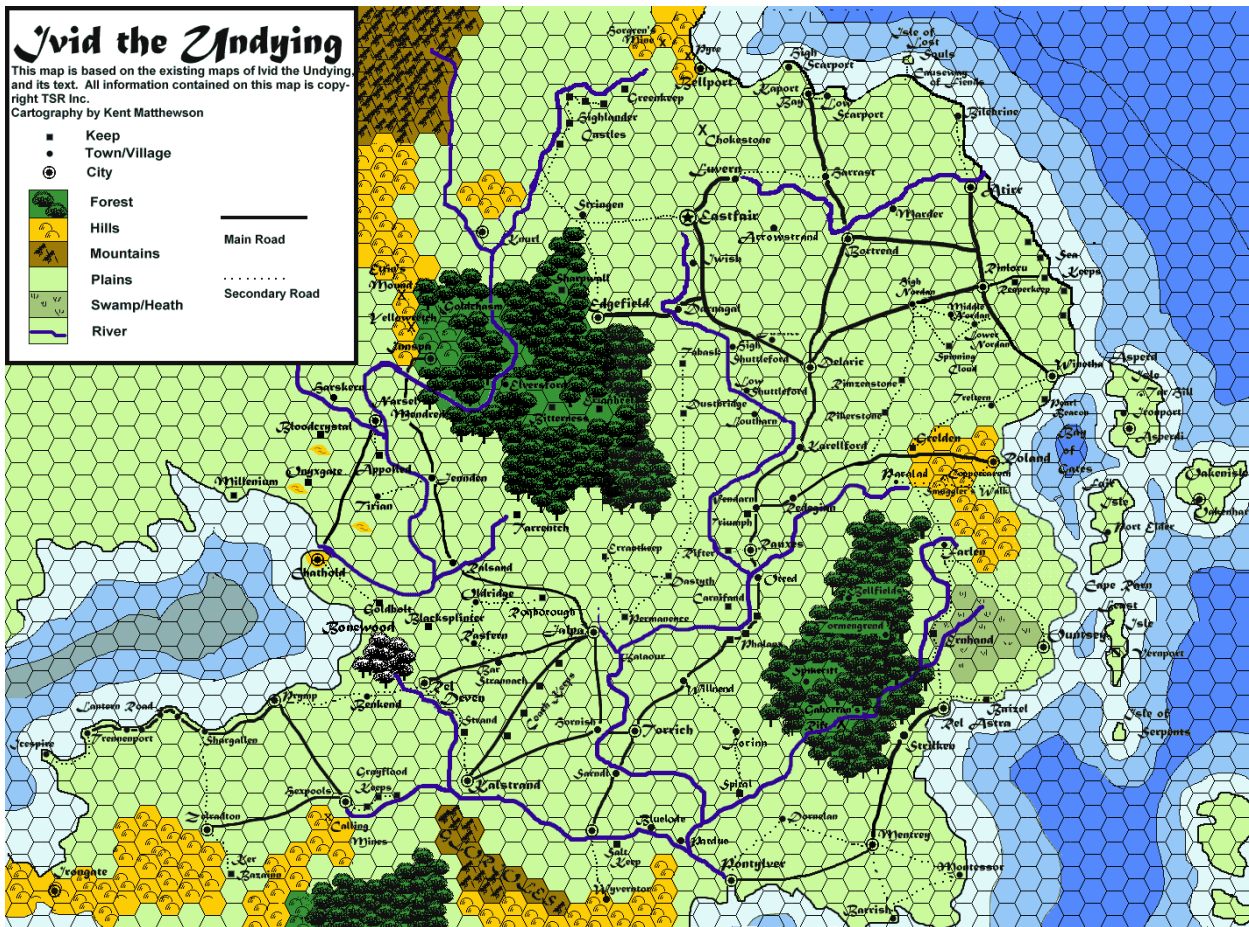
# The Grand Gazetteer

likely be simple—basic axes and staves, common shields, and leather or padded armor. Better equipment might be hard to come by or might be very expensive—500% for chain mail, 1000% for plate mail, etc.

Taxes and tithes aren't listed for each area, but the main text makes reference to them if they are excessive to the point of creating social unrest, extreme oppression, and other burdens.

Each gazetteer-style chapter usually gives a general picture of the land, followed by details of major locations, settlements, special features including ruins, natural marvels, magical sites, and more. Non-player characters

of importance have profiles given at the end of each chapter. The final chapter at the back of the book also gives an alphabetically indexed list of NPC profiles and where to find them in this book. These profiles list exceptional statistics and magic items together with a personality sketch. In the profiles, the AC values given have Dexterity bonuses already included. Magical items listed include only those important to the character's role or function, and one-use items, such as potions and scrolls are never included. The DM can add or delete magic items as appropriate for his campaign, but he should be careful not to overload low-level NPCs with many extra items which they would hardly possess.





# Rauxes and the Lands of the Overking

Pop.: 175,000  
Capital: Rauxes (pop. 22,200)  
Ruler: Ivid The Undying (many nominal titles)  
Rulership: High (Rauxes), Medium elsewhere  
Cost Multiplier: 180%

About 80% of the lands in the area shown on the color map are owned by Ivid V or are held in royal trust by troops and liegemen nominally loyal to Ivid.

The situation is very different in Rauxes.

## Rauxes

Ivid still has firm control, politically speaking, in the capital city. His Imperial Regulars (infantry), Companion Guard, and the Town Guard remain loyal to him. But the human troops work for him almost entirely out of fear of the baatezu and evil priests who throng the city.

However, by no means everything Ivid decrees comes to pass. His courtiers have learned that Ivid is now so hopelessly deranged that he cannot tell fact from fiction, and thus simply telling him that such-and-such has been done (even if it hasn't) will keep them alive as opposed to being executed for treason.

The overking's insanity leaves him without any real notion of what is going on in Aerdy. He still believes the Great Kingdom is intact and that his armies are currently recruiting from South and North Provinces, and the Bone March, preparing for another strike against Nyronnd.

He plans this for the end of summer, when crops are ripening in the fields, allowing his armies to survive by foraging as they go. However, Ivid sees spies everywhere and daily orders the execution of traitors in his realm. Again, he is told that these orders have been carried out.

From time to time, a public execution is held by the Screaming Column if an appropriate culprit can be found. Since most of the imagined enemies are far away, or even nonexistent, this is obviously not often possible.

Half the population of the city has fled in terror, although now the Town Guard at the five city gates have orders to let no man or woman leave without an imperial pass.

Those seeking to escape must do so through the Undercity, braving its terrors, or else try to scale the 25-foot high city walls and avoid the mobats, flying fiends, and imperial mages who patrol the outskirts of the capital. Few are crazy or desperate enough to attempt this. Far fewer still succeed.

The atmosphere in this city is that of the last days of a terrible tragedy. Everyone knows that Ivid's days are numbered, and few believe he can survive the coming year. For most city folk, this is no comfort; they don't believe that they can survive the coming year either—and they are lapsed into utter despair. Some live day-to-day; others collapse into stuporous helplessness.

Most taverns and shops are boarded up, and little trade goes on now. Those artisans left in the city hoard what they can in the hope of better times to come, though they are eager to sell if they have any hope of not being robbed by thieves or the Town Guard (much the same thing).

Some food reaches the city still from Naelax lands around Rauxes, but many ordinary folk are close to starvation. Some even hunt rats for food, braving the possibility that one of the city's wererats will get to do the eating instead.

People are terrified of the Companion Guard, though the Town Guard can usually be bribed and the Imperial Regulars are typically kept within barracks—unless there is any serious unrest, when they will be called out to reinforce the Town Guard. Details of these military units can be found at the back of this book.

There are exceptions to this, however. Princes Ishainken and Zamasken of the House of Naelax hold court at decayed bordellos with their debauched and toadying retinues.

Both feign absolute loyalty to Ivid, and the town military forces do not dare interfere with these cousins of the overking. Many other dark factions and forces lurk within Rauxes, as the location descriptions below show.

Role playing in Rauxes is desperate and dangerous. Drunken orcs, brutal troops, corrupt militia, desperate thieves and beggars and fiends who pull people limb from limb for the sheer pleasure of it are only part of the danger here. There are many other horrors, but there are three general dangers which should be mentioned.

## Floods, Disease, and Treason!

Many buildings in Rauxes are unstable and hazardous. Flooding has been a major problem in Rauxes for several years, with significant rainfall causing water tables around the Imeda-Flanmi rivers to rise to record levels. Extensive areas of the Undercity have been flooded, as have the cellars and basements of many buildings.

Wall foundations have collapsed in some buildings, and rotted in others. The buildings which have collapsed and not been rebuilt for lack of funds are the obvious hazards. It is the buildings on the point of collapse which are much more dangerous.

Pursuing a quarry into a rundown area of the city, or even an abandoned mansion, can invite the possibility of a structural collapse almost anywhere. The only good thing about this is that the Town Guard know which buildings are unsafe and don't enter them. Therefore, avoiding their pursuits can be easier than one might expect.

Second, disease is endemic in the city. Sewer flooding and water pollution, coupled with the rapid growth in the vermin population, are the major causes.

Player characters in Rauxes must make a Constitution

# Rauxes and the Lands of the Overking

check every week to avoid catching some form of disease, which will have the effect of reducing Constitution by 1 point per month until a *cure disease* spell or similar is used. Lost Constitution points can then be regained at the rate of 1 point per week if the character rests, 1 point per 2 weeks otherwise. If the disease causes the victim's Constitution to reach zero, he dies.

The DM may decide that if PCs enter an exceptionally filthy area, such as the Viper Tenements or the Undercity, any exposure above 12 hours means an automatic check for disease.

The third problem facing the population is the place's laws. While new and absurd laws are decreed by Ivid on an almost daily basis, the Town Guard has virtually given up trying to enforce them. The one exception is that of treason. It is treason, for example, to use any name other than "Great Kingdom" for any part of the lands of Aerdy—including Almor, North Province, etc. Ordinary people are only too eager to run to the Town Guard with an account of anyone who has dared do so. It is treason to wear any holy symbol or the regalia of any faith other than that of Baalzy (save for priests of Hextor). And so on. The important point is that to have any chance of surviving, any PC here must keep his head down and grovel and fawn when he must.

## Location Key and Details

Obviously, Rauxes is so large that it allows ample scope for the DM to add locations to those listed below, which are simply the most important for adventuring here.

Many other places will be deserted or abandoned, of course, but room has been left for DM expansion. Again, since the overking must (surely?) die of his disease before too long, Rauxes will change greatly in the near future, so an over-detailed city plan will be of little use to the DM. For the DM wishing to develop Rauxes, WG8: *Fate of Istus* gives a map of pre-war Rauxes which can be adapted.

### 1-5. City Gates

As shown on the city map, these are in order: North Gate, East Gate, Warrior Gate, Old West Gate, New West Gate. Each gatehouse has a detachment of 40 Town Guard who interrogate all-comers regarding their purpose for visiting. The guards extract whatever bribes they can. Simply paying 2d6 gp will get a person into Rauxes, but a bribe of 100 gp+ is needed to get out without an imperial pass. There is a 25% chance at any time that 1d3 spinagon baatezu will be perched atop the walls close by any city gate—and if they are the Town Guard won't dare to accept bribes. The baatezu usually employ *stinking cloud* spells as a first attack against anyone trying to escape or using force.

### 6. The Great Way

This major highway around the overking's palace

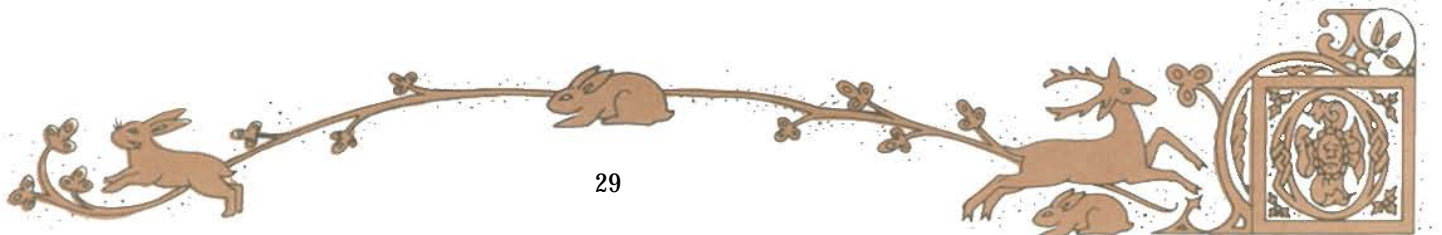
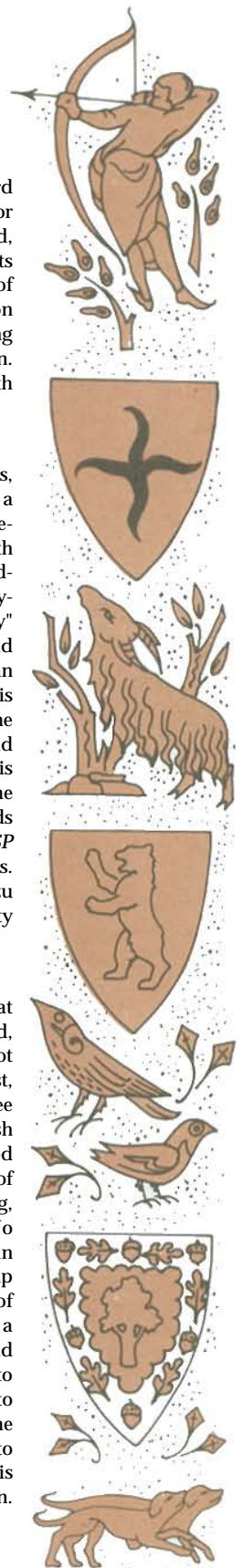
grounds is 20 yards wide, with the central eight-yard strip being made of very large, smoothed stones a yard or so in length and breadth. Only the Companion Guard, aristocrats, and members of the Royal Guild of Merchants and their bearers can walk along these stones. The rest of the population must use the small cobbled stone strips on either side of this central path. Thus, being seen walking the central stones here is a sign of one's social position. Detachments of 1d6+6 fiend-knights goosestep the length of the Great Way at 20-minute intervals, day and night.

### 7. Temple of Baalzy

This is a new building within the palace grounds, which the overking has staffed by fiend-knights and a sprinkling of assorted minions dressed in lurid purple-and-cream robes. The temple is richly ornamented with much gold, silver, and fine woods, and great stained-glass windows show the fat form of a grinning richly-dressed man seated before a huge meal—"Baalzy" himself. On Stardays the Town Guard is forced to attend services here with as many of the local people as they can drag along with them. Offerings are given up to this fictional power, and prayers are offered in thanks for the prosperity that Baalzy and the enlightened rule of Ivid have brought the Great Kingdom. Everyone knows this is an absurd nonsense, but they participate anyway. In the warren of "priest's chambers" lurk the cathedral fiends who watch those attending using powers such as *ESP* and *know alignment* to check for suspicious characters. The "high priest" is actually a mutant cornugon baatezu in the service of Baalzephon, with the additional ability of being able to *polymorph* itself into human form.

### 8. Temple of Boccob

This is still standing because while Ivid ordered that only Baalzy's faith would in the future be recognized, Boccob's high priest is known to be so powerful that not even fiends dared to confront him. Since the priest, Rillikandren, remains within his temple with his three acolytes—and has magical sources of food and fresh water, so the four are self-sufficient—he is not considered a danger by fiends, priests of Hextor, or other servants of Ivid. The temple is wholly resistant to magical scrying, *teleportation*, entrance by *plane shifting* and the like. No one knows what Rillikandren is doing staying here in these times, but in the past month a magical aurora lit up the cupola atop the temple, and when a detachment of Town Guard came to investigate they were repelled by a *wall of force* around the building. A few visitors are said by some to have been admitted by night, perhaps to consult the Book of Hours which the high priest is said to possess—a prophetic work said to speak of the decline and fall of the House of Naelax—and who is destined to be the next Ruling Royal House. The House of Darnen is known to have sent negotiators to talk with Rillikandren.





# Rauxes and the Lands of the Overking

But they have come away without being allowed entry.

## 9. Temple of Pholtus

When Emasstus Carcosa was taken from the temple here to the horror of Ivid's dungeons, the remaining priests were kept silent in the sealed-up building by a Companion Guard detachment. After two weeks of isolation, it was publicly pronounced that an outbreak of plague had killed all inside. Most folk did not believe it, but none dared investigate, fearing the disease. The building is still sealed up, with powerful *glyphs of warding* on all entrances (many with secondary effects such as *hold person* and even *energy drain* cast into them). Not even desperate thieves will venture here.

Inside, unknown to most in Rauxes, the upper level of the temple has been looted, although in secret basement's treasures and a handful of magical items have been carefully hidden. The priests and acolytes all have been slain and raised as undead. A small pack of ghouls enters the Undercity from a secret door in the basements. One priest here stands as a failed attempt to create an animus from him. He has animus statistics, save for an inability to use the *command* and *domination* powers. Further, he does not regenerate. This wretched creature is virtually mindless, shambling about inside the temple and vocalizing ghastly, stomach-turning howls of fury and despair. Any PC follower of Pholtus granting him the peace of death would certainly receive the blessing of Pholtus.

## 10. Temple of Hextor

Also within the main palace grounds, this temple is used by Hextor's priesthood, elite warriors, human members of the Companion Guard, and some of Ivid's advisers. Patriarch-General Pyrannden has chambers here, and in addition to church records, monies, and the like, he jealously guards the unholy bloodshield which is the temple's most prized magical artifact. Services are held here on days sacred to Hextor, such as anniversaries of exceptionally bloody battles, and the usual ghastly rituals of Hextor's faith are enacted during them.

Especially gruesome features of this temple are four guardian statues made entirely from coagulated blood. They have the statistics of flesh golems, but they never escape priestly control.

## 11. Temple of Zilchus

When Baalzy's faith was proclaimed by Ivid, this temple was effectively closed down by the priests themselves. While they did not actively oppose Ivid, they simply withdrew their presence. The temple has not been looted, but most of its wealth has been quietly shipped out of Rauxes. Only a handful of acolytes remain to keep the temple from complete ruin. They bribe the Town Guard to leave them alone, and two of them are minor princelings of the House of Darmen, so they are relatively safe from casual attack by militia.

## 12. Barracks of the Black Legion

These 400 elite Imperial Regulars are all CE in alignment, but they are well-disciplined war veterans led by the brutal General Schinuss, famous for his *dancing sword* and his magical artificial left eye (granting *true seeing* and being able to project *fear* as per *wand* once a day). The Imperial Regulars put down major civil unrest and act as shock troops in wars.

## 13a-c. Support Buildings

Location #13a is the armory; complete with small smithy, only mundane (non-magical) weapons are kept here. The larger #13b is another stables, with a more impressive smithy where the dwarf blacksmith Gragend Klanden can be found. He is as evil-hearted as he is excellent at his craft. Finally, #13c is a small set of tenement cottages built for palace domestic servants and drudges.

## 14. Captain's Quarters

This barracks is used by the commanding officers of the Imperial Regulars and the human leaders of the Companion Guard. Tension here is great, since Ivid usually has one or two of them executed for incompetence—more or less at random—every week. All are too terrified to oppose the overking, and most are too frightened to try to flee—the last attempt resulted in all the mutineers being caught, turned into exhibits in the Screaming Column, and a half-dozen of those who didn't try to escape being executed because they had not ratted on their fellows.

## 15. Tower of the Dead

These royal crypts are exclusively for powerful princes of the House of Naelax. Many of them do their best to avoid being buried here, fearful of what Ivid might do with their remains. Strangely enough, Ivid fears toying with his dead relatives—while being quite happy to despatch those still alive with the utmost cruelty.

The great iron gates of the crypt complex are protected with *antipathy* spells against all of non-evil alignment. Magical traps of the truly murderous kind are commonplace among the passageways and burial chambers. Many of the princes buried here had at least one or more valuable personal treasure or magical item entombed with them—so the potential haul of treasure is great. Still, few would dare brave the traps, brown molds, and other natural hazards, and noncorporeal undead, ghosts, spectres, and wraiths, which are said to haunt the place.

Some of the princes' favorite servitors were buried with them, since some believe that those servants will help the deceased reach the afterlife safely. They were usually buried without their permission and, indeed, well before their lives would have ended from any natural causes. Many of them wander the crypts as undead, while others lurk as skulks in the shadows.

Note that Naelax overkings themselves are always cremated and their ashes dissolved in acid to prevent

# Rauxes and the Lands of the Overking

attempts at *resurrection*, *speaking with dead*, and the use of other enchantments. Thus, these tombs contain only ceremonial, nominal burial chambers, containing statues, personal treasures and the like.

## 16. Tower of the Fiend-Knights

Ivid's detachment of some 200 fiend-knights are stationed here. These horrors are feared by all the human troops of the compound. Magical constructs of sinister crafting, these ghastly things have no need of sleep or rest, and neither do the undead mounts stabled elsewhere.

These troops are utterly loyal to Ivid. Unfortunately, they have virtually no independent volition and little creative or innovative capacity.

## 17. Karoolck's Tower

The stooping, limping figure of Ivid's court wizard has his chambers atop this craggy, mobat-infested tower. His pathetic retinue of goblin servants are on hand to fetch and carry for him—and to suffer the indignity of a swift *disintegration* if Karoolck is roused to anger. Karoolck, the rust-robed archmage, is known to have many oozes, puddings and the like within his tower, acting as guards and disposers of waste (such as intruders, though there have been very few of those, and bodies generally). Clutching his bizarre *staff*, Karoolck is said by many virtually to control Ivid, in the service of Baalzephon (though few know of the baatezu whose servant Karoolck is).

Atop his tower, Karoolck is often heard screaming and ranting at traitors and about treasons which exist mostly in his own imagination. The name "Xaene" is heard over and over—clearly the Archmage is terrified of a possible vengeful return of his predecessor.

Karoolck's political role is further detailed below, but any who attempt to enter his tower might take heed of the obstacles they would face in addition to his guards. His tower has the same magical defenses as the royal palace (see below), and the archmage himself, not to mention the magical items he carries, present a formidable defense.

Karoolck is known to have a pair of iron golems, one guarding his own bedchamber and one in his laboratory. Ghouls and a vampiric mist are found in his dungeon. The archmage also has a dozen or so trained stirges which he has enchanted to be immune to *hold*, *charm* and *fear* spells and which also deliver a poisonous bite (1d12 damage in addition to normal damage, saving throw for half). Karoolck's apprentice is a neutral-aligned alu-fiend renegade from the Abyss with the powers of a 9th-level mage (Int 18), known to be an expert in the preparation of poisonous gases, armor-corroding acids, and *dust of sneezing and choking*.

## 18. Palace of the Overking

No interior map is given for this huge building. If the DM wishes to use it in an adventure, then it will require a great deal of planning and mapping. Even getting anywhere near it, given the formidable forces in the palace compound, would be a feat in itself. Only the highest-level PCs could hope to enter the Imperial Palace and survive.

The palace building was constructed with magical mortar between stonework, which eliminates all forms of magical scrying, *teleporting*, *dimension dooring*, *plane shifting* etc. into the building from outside.

Likewise, it is virtually immune to fire- or electrically-based attacks, and acid damage.

Surrounding the vast circular palace are eight circular guard towers, each 130' high (some 20' higher than the palace itself). Barbazu and spinagon guards occupy the top levels of these towers, and elite bowmen take up the middle floors. At ground level (there are separate staircases to higher level rooms), charmed monsters with special magical attacks, including basilisks, medusae, catoblepases, and chimeras, are kept penned up. The doors to each tower can be magically opened from within the palace and the monsters unleashed to wreak havoc on any trying to storm the palace.

The palace houses many people and chambers other than those of the royals, of course. The great chancelleries and treasure houses are found here.

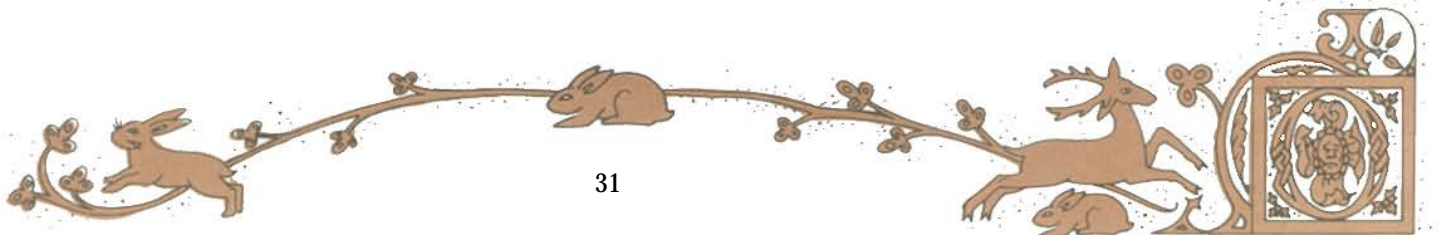
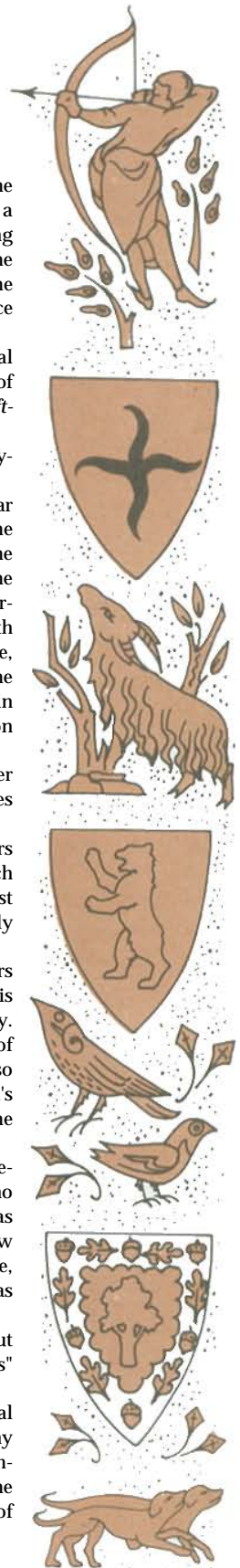
The treasury is largely empty, save for sealed chambers containing icons and relics of ancient civilizations which have great value in normal times but which are almost worthless to the overking now. The treasury is heavily magically warded and has many golem guards.

Patriarch-General Pyrannden of Hextor has chambers here and maintains a royal shrine to Hextor, which is disused since the proclamation of the faith of Balzy. Minor ceremonial magical items, along with hordes of ju-ju zombies, can be found therein. There are also personal rooms for generals and senior officers of Ivid's armies, a war-room with great magical maps of the Flanaess, and such.

The new spymaster of the Web, the half-elfen mage-thief Inshalzen, also cowers in his offices here. He has no idea of where his juniors are, since his predecessor was executed and he has simply been expected to know everything without being told. He is desperate to escape, but being only a 6th-level mage he lacks spells such as *teleport* to enable him to do this.

The Court of Essence is still a majestic chamber, but now is used solely for Ivid to drag forced "confessions" out of people he imagines to be traitors to the crown.

The combat mages of the overking deserve special mention; they have chambers and laboratories on many second-floor rooms with direct access to the eight peripheral towers. This allows them to keep watch over the magical monster guards therein. There are some 30 of





# Rauxes and the Lands of the Overking

these mages, of levels 7-14, and they have a fair number of defensive items including *rings of protection*, *cloaks of displacement*, *bracers of defense*, and more. The mages are exceptionally well-equipped with offensive magical items, notably wands. They are under the command of Karoolck, and many of them make few bones about not liking this at all. Those who could *teleport* to escape do not do so for fear that they would be pursued by fiends and invisible stalkers or because there is simply nowhere they know well enough, or would feel secure at, to flee to.

Ivid's own throne room is a 40-yard diameter circular chamber with the great malachite throne set into the north wall. The throne itself casts an invisible *globe of invulnerability* on the overking seated upon it, and grants him *true seeing*. Once per week, if the correct command word is uttered, the throne can be used to open a gate to the uppermost of the Nine Hells. But it provides no protection against any being entering through that gate, and there is a 5% chance per use of bringing insanity to the person opening the gate.

Ivid himself wears lurid ceremonial robes at all times—sometimes purple and blue, other times red and gold, or black, yellow and rust. The colors depend on his mood, with the more dismal tones signalling that he is in a very foul mood. Of late, he has taken to wearing a full-face white lacquered mask to hide a psoriatic skin condition which his wasting disease brings. He always bears his symbols of office, though their weight makes him stooped: the Staff of Naelax (*staff of thunder and lightning*), Orb of Rax (*brooch of shielding* which, if used, regenerates 20 hp of defensive value per day), and the Crown of Aerdy (*helm of brilliance*).

Ivid also has the remnants of the royal family here, save for his second son Prince Konshandin who has fled to Delaric. Almost all of the surviving royal princes have been slain and resurrected as animuses—see the lineage chart for details. They are regularly administered a complex alkaloid preparation by Hextor's priests, which has the effect of dulling their minds and keeping them loyal to the overking (or at least being incapable of rousing themselves to actively strike against him). Ivid has had many of them executed as traitors, of course.

The dungeons of the royal palace contain an unknown number of wretches suffering the Endless Death. Here, they are tortured by priests of Hextor, given a *ring of regeneration*, and then tortured all over again. Such treatment renders the victims insane very swiftly. The current victims include Spidasa, Censor of Medegia, and it is possible that Chelor, Herzog of South Province, is similarly tormented—though some say he is dead. Some folk believe that Osson of Almor is similarly imprisoned in the unspeakable dungeons, swarming with evil priests, lesser and least baatezu, undead of most kinds, and worse. There may be secret entrances to the Undercity from these dungeons—but the handful of Undercity

denizens who believe that also say that these lead into mind-affecting mazes, filled with jellies, molds, undead and worse.

Special Note, Animuses: The Royal Palace also contains a secret chamber within its dungeons where fiends and priests of Hextor work together to create animuses. This creation process is unique, and cannot be quantified in simple terms (no spell description in the AD&D game format fits this). Essentially, the priests use magical energies of a power almost equivalent to a quest spell (Tome of Magic). Meanwhile, a pit fiend in the service of Baalzephon uses its wish power to complete the arcane enchantment. For this reason alone, animus creation is not an everyday event.

The third vital element is the casket of abyssal bone, one of the artifacts granted to Ivenzen by Baalzephon. The ritual used to create the animus involves slaying the victim and a fair number of other souls besides, and it does not bear relating here.

There are no more than 40 or so animus creatures in Aerdy, and Ivid has been told by Baalzephon that he can spare few wishes from his pit fiends to create more.

## 19. The Screaming Column in Oltary Park

Oltary Park is deserted, save for a few ghouls or necromancers prowling it by night. This fell place strikes fear into all of Rauxes's folk.

Originally, Oltary Park was a graveyard. By an imperial decree of CY 467, Ivid I ruled that the bodies of who died within Rauxes became the possession of the crown unless a fee of 100 gp could be paid for the purpose of burial here. This ensured a supply of pauper-bodies which could be used for the purposes of animating dead by evil priests. The zombies so created were used as slave labor. The ordinary folk hated this indignity, of course, and many attempted to flee Rauxes to avoid this fate when they grew old or suffered from serious illness.

For those who could afford it, Oltary Park was their burial site. The area is filled with underground catacombs and crypt complexes, although the number of undead here is fewer than one might expect.

Many people were cremated and buried simply in urns set into walls of great crypts, fearing that despite their burial payment, their bodies would be stolen and animated anyway if still intact. More dangerous are the wererats which prowl the crypts from the Undercity, looking for any foolish enough to try tomb-robbing (there is very little treasure here in any event).

Above ground, Oltary Park appears innocuous enough, with its shrubby gardens, wooden bench seats, and its jalzanda trees which emit a pungent and slightly lethargy-inducing perfume from their purple flowers in late spring. The exception is the Screaming Column, set in the middle of the park.

# Rauxes and the Lands of the Overking

The Screaming Column was prepared for traitors and others the overking wished to have publicly, and especially unpleasantly, punished. It appears as a 30' tall column some 8' in diameter, made of red-veined marble-like stone. All around the column's circumference, faces are frozen in grimaces, screams, and expressions of dreadful anguish.

When a new victim is to be cast into the column, he is publicly beheaded (with a blunt axe, often needing two or more strikes). The severed head is then magically treated by priests of Hextor using a powerful and unique enchantment (the unholy bloodshield is vital to this). The head then becomes alive, sentient, capable of experiencing pain. The officiating senior priest then plunges the head into the column, where it is frozen into the stony mass (not unlike a *meld into stone* spell).

The heads so incarcerated are but driven mad by malign magic on the column. If any spell such as *ESP* or *speak with dead* is used, the spellcaster has a 25% chance of becoming insane immediately; the heads cannot be *resurrected*. Horribly, the unholy bloodshield can also be used to stimulate the column for a period of 2d6 minutes once per week, so that the entire structure is filled with writhing, screaming, gibbering faces. Simply witnessing this does wonders for discouraging treason among the people of Rauxes.

## 20. Zelizar's House

This house of ill repute has become debauched to an appalling degree. Its most notable resident, a semi-permanent guest, is Prince Ishainken of Naelax. A major landholder in the lands north of the Imeda east of Rauxes, Ishainken is important because his lands supply more than over half the food which keeps Rauxes from starvation and utter collapse. Ishainken is a jaded, warped, half-deranged wretch who barely cares whether he lives or dies; he's simply here to see the last act of the tragedy of Naelax played out.

From his point of view, the best way to do this is by indulging himself to the utmost.

Ishainken's money, and that of a handful of degenerate Rauxes merchants with some resources left, keeps Zelizar's establishment going. Somehow, the proprietor manages to stock a good supply of powerful liquor, addictive substances of various kinds, depraved and mostly-diseased doxies, and wretches who fight to the death in the gladiatorial pit in the cellars.

From time to time, a polymorphed fiend might enjoy a little voyeurism here, and a priest of Hextor or one of Rauxes's few remaining mages could attend for some particular indulgence.

In addition to the dubious pleasure of meeting such folk, Ishainken is not without interest; he knows some hidden secrets concerning the Naelax bloodline. Specifically, he has carefully concealed at his home castle a text

written by Xaene himself. It states that Ivid V was not the biological son of Ivid IV, but rather the son of a union between a tanar'ri and an enchantress. While the claim may be wholly false, the individual who owned the other copy was pursued for years by Ivid's agents and finally slain (Stankaster of Stankaster's Tower; see *From The Ashes*, Campaign Book).

Ivid is unaware that any other copy of this text exists. Ishainken isn't sure what value it may prove to have, but he considers that if and when it is the right time to back a claimant to the throne, this book might prove very useful.

## 21. Halfhigh's Mead and Ale

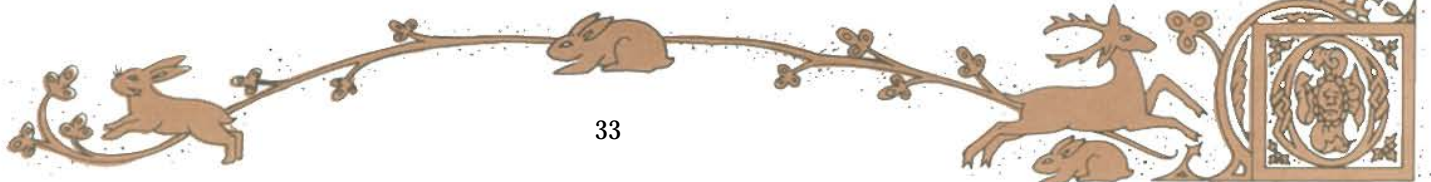
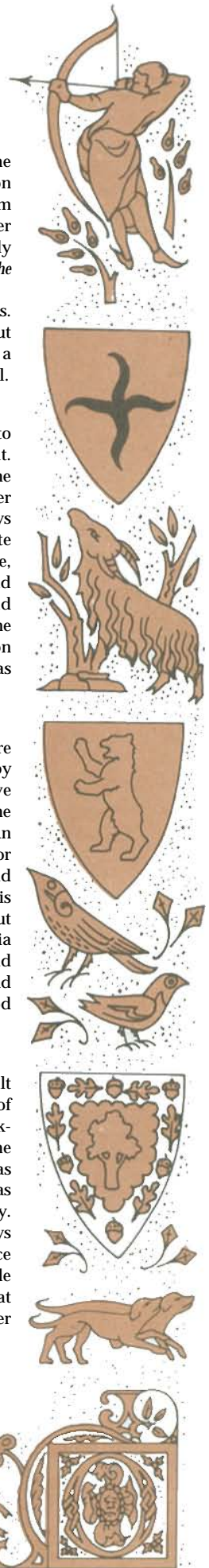
Halfhigh—a male halfling—still somehow manages to provide decent refreshment for those who can afford it. That he has survived is due simply to the fact that he provisions the palace and provides kegs of a dark, porter beer of which Ivid is especially fond. Halfhigh always drinks a sample of each keg before Ivid, to demonstrate that it is not poisoned. The halfling is terrified, of course, but he is no faithful servant of the overking. Should anyone be able to smuggle him out of Rauxes, he could give a very accurate account of the internal layout of the palace—since he not only delivers beer there, but has on occasion cooked for royal banquets and the like and has thus seen many areas of the palace interior.

## 22. Erthara's Boarding House

This is almost the only general boarding hostelry where residents can hope to be free of harassment and spying by the Town Guard. Erthara is generally thought to have some embarrassing inside information on some of the Captains of the Guard, and is left alone as a result. An accomplished thief and poisoner, Erthara is a senior member of the Thieves' Guild, and guild members hold meetings in her cellars from time to time. Her clientele is varied, with most having a vested interest in keeping out of sight of the Town Guard. Thieves, exiles from Medegia and North Province, mercenaries trying to avoid conscription into Ivid's armies, and others can be found here. Particularly because of the exiles here, this is a good place to learn of events beyond the city walls.

## 23. The Imperial

This grand theater, though its grandeur is fading as gilt peels from its interior decor, still survives because of Ivid's patronage. Once every two weeks or so, the overking sits, wearing his mask, in his private box to watch the resident theatrical troupe re-enact Ivid's great victories as statesman and soldier. Their Villainies of Nyronnd was especially well-received by His Celestial Transcendancy. The theater is perforce attended by all Ivid's lackeys when he goes there (potentially leaving the palace vulnerable to a sneak entry, though the guards outside are formidable enough). And a full house is guaranteed at such times. Anyone entering knows well enough to cheer





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the overking madly when he makes his entrance, during the intermission between acts, and as he leaves.

The dubious delights of attending these performances are enlivened by Ivid's occasional commands to execute performers he doesn't care for, which are carried out on the spot. The night is further sparked by well-intended, but hopeless assassination attempts against Ivid—the last, in Patchwall, being made by three thieves armed with glass globes of *dust of sneezing and choking* which only succeeded in killing 50 or so of Ivid's Imperial Regulars in the stalls.

## 24. The Golden Grain Tavern

This innocuous-looking place is of note only because it is as close to a mage's guild as Rauxes has. Most mages of any stature not compelled to serve Ivid have long ago fled, and the few who remain use this as a meeting place—though they protect themselves with mundane and magical disguises and guard their meets with homunculi, invisible stalkers, and other magical servitors.

If there is any magical sedition in Rauxes, this is the place to find it.

## 25. The Red Dragon

This tavern has been appropriated by Prince Zamasken of Naelax, who simply marched in with his retinue of warriors, slew everyone in the place, and took it over. Zamasken is an animus with the abilities of a 15th-level fighter, and he appears still to serve his cousin, the overking. If Zamasken hates his cousin as so many animuses do, he controls this hatred brilliantly.

Zamasken's 50 elite warriors (levels 4-9) bristle with magical armors and weaponry, with their leader owning a *broadsword* +3, *frost brand* and a *shield* +5. Their shields are embossed with a sinister variant of the heraldry of the Great Kingdom, with a skeletal dragon atop the usual symbol.

It is whispered that a priest of Nerull is among Zamasken's men, and that bodies have been sealed in crates below the Red Dragon and shipped out of the city to Zamasken's lands northwest of Rauxes. This may be just a tall story. For the most part, Zamasken and his men stay holed up within the Red Dragon, and if a few people disappear from the vicinity and screams of torment are heard from the building at night; well, this is nothing unusual in Rauxes.

More startling are the frequent reports of huge creatures the size of mobats, which fly down to the roof of the building some nights. They appear to meld into the roof tiles and sink down into the tavern.

## 26. Jipzinker's House

This ordinary-looking dwelling is home to a "sage"; actually a priest of Nerull, the grim-faced and malodorous Jipzinker. This man is a priest of Nerull, and as a preceptor of Midnight Darkness he and the three

Midnight Darkness assassins (two human thieves and a half-elven mage-thief) beneath his roof still seek out targets in Rauxes for assassination. They keep careful watch on Ertharah's boarding house, and they have a network of informants among the Town Guard and elsewhere. The few sewer workers left, street kids, and the wretches of the eastern tenements alert them to any suspicious individual.

This group, having had no communication from the Hidden Sickle for about three months, is beginning to degenerate into killing for the sake of it. And since their funds grow low, they must perform slay to replenish their coffers.

Jipzinker keeps a meticulous listing of the operations of the cell, which would, obviously, be of considerable interest to many individuals. He also maintains records concerning the actions of the Valorous League of Blindness in Nyronnd—from messages sent by a spy there. The identity of that spy would be of great interest to many.

Apart from these four people, the greatest danger comes from three especially tough ju-ju zombie guards within the house, the touch of which paralyzes the victim for 3d4 rounds unless a saving throw is made to negate this effect.

## 27. The Royal Guild of Merchants

This relatively small building is the old meeting place for members of the guild, and is currently staffed by only a handful of minions save for Deputy Guildmaster Robann Peniaden. While, from time to time, Ivid issues decrees forbidding usury and the like, the Town Guard know well enough that they might be closer to starvation, or walking around in rags, but for the few remaining merchants bringing food and cloth to Rauxes. So they leave the Guild hall well alone.

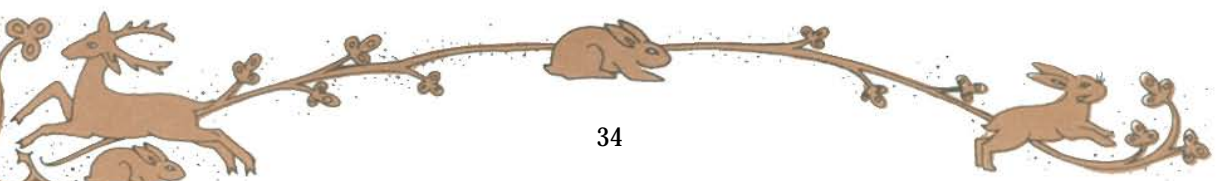
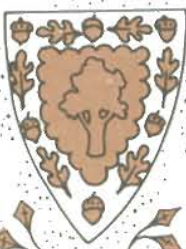
Robann is a worldly man who is extremely careful who he talks to and what he says. He needs absolute proof someone is not a spy for Ivid before he will give anything away. He is well-versed in the real state of affairs around the lands of Aerdy, from accounts given by merchants visiting the capital. Having lived in Rauxes for 22 of his 40 years, he also knows the layout of the city very well. This is an obvious first contact for PCs sent on any kind of mission, or adventure, to Rauxes. But the PCs will have to prove their trustworthiness to Robann before he will divulge anything—and he always wants good payment for his help.

## City Areas

### 28. Militia Buildings

This area of the city—separately walled off with its own guard posts—houses 200 Imperial Regular infantry and 800 orc soldiers, and also has some supply and storage buildings.

The orcs have poor morale and are the remnants of



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army units mostly destroyed in Nyron and Almor; they have not been effectively reorganized. Priests of Hextor do their best to command them, but many orcs escape through the Undercity and hide in the tenements around Viper Row, from where they ambush any who enter.

## 29. The Viper Tenements

The houses between Viper Row and Watch Lane (and also eastward across Watch Lane) are especially decrepit and many are half-collapsed, with their cellars and basements flooded or at best half-filled with foul, stagnant water, sewage, vermin and the like. Perhaps as many as 500 wretches live here. They are orc soldiers escaped from their barracks, beggars, people dying of disease, those hunted by Town Guard, and others in similarly dreadful predicaments. No militia enter this area; the risk of disease is simply too great. Because of the water-sodden conditions of so much of the area, two attempts at burning it down have failed (and the risk of the fire spreading elsewhere in the city has mitigated against any further attempts).

The current plan is to use massed ranks of zombies to murder the occupants, although a first attempt at this failed in part because of the stupidity of the undead and their inability to traverse obstacles effectively.

Those exiled here are desperate enough to attack anyone and anything entering—and their blows, by weapon or just fists and bites, are 25% likely to cause disease. That this area hasn't been entirely decimated by disease might cause some to wonder, not least because diseased bodies are not found lying in the streets and brick-strewn back alleyways of this area.

In fact, a young priest of Pholtus hides out in a dry basement within this area, *curing disease* for all he can. He tries to convert as many as he can to the One True Faith. While he has little success with that, the wretches here are grateful to him for their lives. They don't inform the authorities about him for the simple reason that only people utterly terrified of summary execution by those authorities come to live here.

The priest, Eliast Moroneth, dreams of escape to the Theocracy of the Pale, and he has some information he could barter to anyone prepared to get him out and take him there; see his profile details below.

## 30. The Eastern Slums

The buildings here are small, cramped, built one on top of another in an urban sprawl which guarantees the spread of disease and infection. The roofed-over alleyways are a haven of darkness for thieves and assassins. The lucky folk here sleep two or three in a room, paying a copper or two for a night's rest. Unlucky ones sleep out in the open on roofs, in hammocks slung across alleyways, and even in doorways. Of course, this makes them easy prey for creatures of the night, but there are none to miss

them should they vanish.

Every morning, at dawn, large detachments of Town Guard prowl these slums, dragging off all the able-bodied men and women they can find for work around the city. Pitiful attempts to repair crumbling buildings, clean stonework, and bale out sewage-filled basements are the usual tasks.

## 31. Artisans' Dwellings

The artisans of Rauxes have done their best to flee just as most merchants did. But many who provide necessary services for the troops here, blacksmiths, tanners, and bowyers, were placed under virtual house arrest and could not get away in time after the outbreak of war.

A small detachment of Town Guard outside a dwelling in this area guarantees that the occupant follows a trade necessary to the militia here. Other houses nearby are often abandoned, occupied by middling officers in the Town Guard, or are simply avoided because they are structurally unsound.

## 32. Noble Dwellings

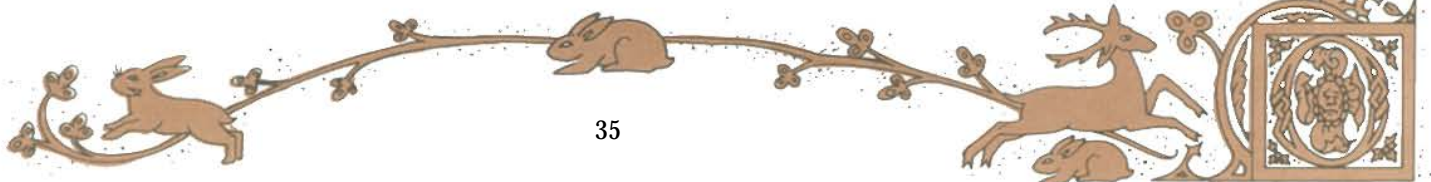
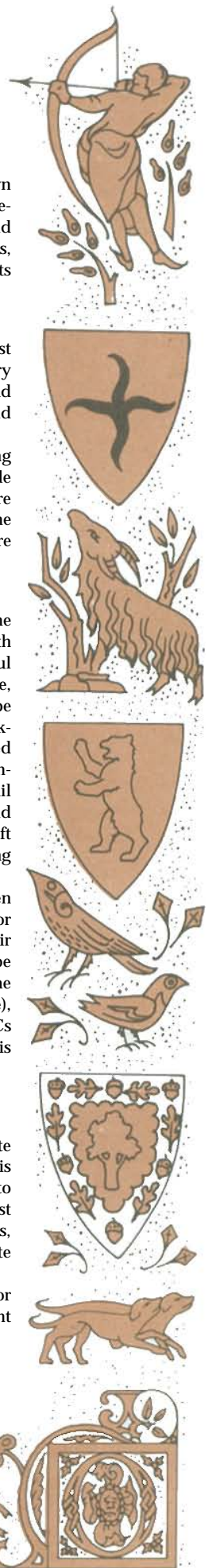
The area between North Gate and Strikers' Lane has the greatest concentration of noble mansions, each with smaller houses for servants dotted around. The handful of remaining merchant-princes, none of political note, who are still within Rauxes can be found here—as can be a couple of very distant princeling-cousins of the overking who live behind shuttered windows and bolted doors. The princelings are terrified that Ivid will remember they are within his city. These minor nobility hail from lands on the eastern edge of the Adri Forest and south of Delaric, and while they have little money left they will certainly offer to pay rescuers well for getting them out of Rauxes and back home.

In other, abandoned, houses, most has been looted—usually by Town Guard who arrested nobles for treason on Ivid's orders and then confiscated their property. However, the occasional exception might be found, where a venturesome thief might find some carefully-hidden item of jewelry (stashed for a last bribe), a diary or account of people and times in Rauxes. For PCs who want to get down to some thievery in Rauxes, this area offers the best chances.

## The Undercity

This is deliberately unmapped, to allow the DM complete freedom to design it as he chooses. The Undercity is composed of city sewers, which lead by a long outflow to a network of cesspits and by another to the Flanmi just before it joins with the Imeda. There are burial chambers, basements and cellars, and even dungeons and private jails (and the base of one or two wizard's towers, too).

However, access through the Undercity to major locations (notably the royal palace) is either non-existent





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or else fraught with danger and actually designed as traps.

For the DM wishing to map some of the Undercity, PCs might learn of some dangers there through rumors in Rauxes. Wererats are the most numerous menace, and there are no few diseased zombies which have lurched out of the control of evil priests and which wander aimlessly there.

Slimes, molds and oozes are commonplace. The occasional otyugh, escaped from some princeling's private sewage-disposal system, sloshes around in the sewers. Fiends are said to stalk there from time to time, but this is in fact very rare.

Among other dangers that exist, but which PCs are most unlikely to hear about from any rumor, are a pair of marids magically imprisoned beneath the tower of a long-fled wizard. Their confinement has enraged them to the point where they will attack anyone entering their bounded area. They guard a *staff of power* (crafted to be usable by wizards of chaotic alignments only) in the wizard's cellars, which are also packed with magical traps and watery magics. Water weirds, a water elemental, and more lurk inside.

However, even the marids are small beer compared to Xaene, the ex-court mage, now a two-headed lich dwelling in the Undercity, biding his time. What Xaene's plans are, Istus alone knows.

## Why Come to Rauxes?

Given the sheer hellishness of Rauxes, one might wonder why any PCs would wish to go there.

The chapter, **Whispers and Ventures**, lists many adventures and scenarios set in Rauxes, or adventures involving a visit to this awful city. The location key above also refers to many individuals desperate to escape the city, and to treasures and information dotted around in hidden and/or guarded locations.

The DM will have to strongarm PCs to enter here, however, so as a general rule for any adventure involving entering the city the DM should make sure that the PCs need some person, item, or information which cannot be acquired in any other way.

## Fate of the Overking

It is certain that Ivid's disease will kill him, but this will take longer than many think. Ivid will probably survive for at least another year of game time, and when he does die Karoolck and Baalzephon will certainly not allow this fact to be known. Attempts will be made to employ the same magic used in the creation of animuses to revivify Ivid as some form of Undead.

If this fails, Karoolck and Baalzephon will do their best to maintain the pretense that Ivid is still alive for as long

as they can. After all, very few other people actually see Ivid. And since he is always masked, an impostor could continue to occupy the malachite throne at least for a time.

Karoolck and Baalzephon would then look for another pawn, a scion of Naelax they could control in the same way as they currently control Ivid. Which candidate they would pick is uncertain. One of the animus sons of Ivid might be a possibility, but so might the powerful Prince Strychan of Dustbridge. Only time will tell.

## Personalities of Rauxes

**Darlack Ruhick, Commander of the Companion Guard:** 16th-level fighter (Str 18/81, Dex 17, Con 17, Wis 17). AC -3 (*fiend armor* +3, plate version, shield not used), hp 112, AL LE. Ruhick employs a *two-handed sword* +4 which does double damage (2d10+8/6d6+8) against creatures of good alignment, and owns a *composite longbow* +2 together with a quiver of *sheaf arrows* +2 and *arrows of slaying* (one each for good-aligned priests, mages, and warriors, and one for any good-aligned "faerie" being). He rides a huge heavy roan warhorse with *horseshoes of a zephyr*. Ruhick is 32, a Princeling of Naelax, commander of the guard since the Pact of Greyhawk was signed. Tall at 6' 4", the black-haired man has a permanently jaundiced complexion and suffers periodic outbreaks of sores over his back and shoulders, which are horribly painful. The similarity to Ivid's skin lesions does not go unnoticed.

Ruhick oversees security at the palace together with Karoolck. Ruhick is greatly feared on account of his cold, controlled sadism; he has thrown in his lot with Ivid because he reasons (correctly) that if Ivid falls, his life won't be worth a copper common. However, if he could be assured safe haven outside Rauxes, it is not impossible that he might become a turncoat. He is a clever, though not creative, military commander, leading an elite pursuit squad of a dozen cavalry all of whose stallions have the same magical horseshoes as his own mount. Dispatched rarely, this squad has a superb record for bringing back those who have managed to flee Rauxes for suitable punishment.

**Elliaist Moroneth:** 6th-level priest of Pholtus (Wis 17, Cha 15). AC 3 (*chain mail* +1), hp 30, AL LG. Elliaist is a mere 22 years old, 5' 9", with sandy-blond hair and light hazel eyes. Elliaist cares for the wretches of the Viper Tenements, curing disease both by spell and by virtue of an otherwise humble *mace* +1 which has this power once a week. He has no illusions about his sermons; he knows few will convert. Still, he is moved by a sense of pity for those he sees around him.

Elliaist is quite a simple soul, one of the few of the Pholtus priests to escape their doom here. But he isn't

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easily deceived. He is wary of any who offer him help, fearing imperial spies. Elliaist has extensive maps of the Undercity, and he knows a handful of other good-aligned refugees who manage to hide out in abandoned houses, disguise themselves in the slums, or in the Undercity. The DM should consider what he wants these contacts to be—perhaps a sage or two, a low-level priest of another good-aligned power, or a mid-level mage and his apprentice hiding from Karoolck. A mage would need an *amulet of proof against detection and location* to stay hidden from the archmage.

Rauxes is unlikely to have any active resistance network, but a token network could make for interesting adventuring. Elliaist would love to escape and head for the Theocracy, but he would want to do what he could for the wretches of the Viper Tenements first.

**Erthara (Kallarn):** 9th-level thief (Con 16, Dex 17, Int 16). AC 1 (*bracers of defense* AC 3), hp 48, AL CN. Small at 5' 1" and slender of build, Erthara (almost always known by her first name alone) is 37 years old, with long wavy auburn hair and hazel eyes. She owns a *short sword* +3, a *blowgun* +2 with abundant venom of various types, and a *ring of free action* and a *ring of invisibility*. Erthara's father is a captain among the Sea Barons, and she still manages to get some goods smuggled into Rauxes through that route and via Roland. She has to pay the Town Guard, but she can afford that from her looting of many nobles' houses in the past.

Erthara is an important council member of the Thieves' Guild (long driven underground by Ivid). The other council members are Inkeren Kalarn (a distant cousin; 12th-level thief), Flandar Llanderan (11th level), and Pitchain Delarenden (8th-level); they are of evil alignments.

Erthara is a good "street level" contact within Rauxes. She has maps of Undercity areas and knows the patrol times of the Town Guard in various sections of Rauxes. However, she is thoroughly unprincipled, and she is not above informing the Town Guard of one or two subversives from time to time. Dealing with her is safest if one can offer some magical aid to disguise her (especially a permanent magical item). Such an item would be useful for her forays into the city.

**Ishainken, Prince of the House of Naelax:** 6th-level thief (Dex 17, Int 15). AC -1 (*leather armor* +3, *ring of protection* +3), hp 28, AL CE. Ishainken is 29, 5' 9", with light brown hair and brown eyes; his skin is pitted and his lank hair is greasy. Ishainken is utterly nihilistic, hateful and spiteful, and wholly unprincipled. Only the promise of some more extreme stimulus to jolt his jaded system into arousal interests him now. Ishainken's entourage at Zelizar's house includes half a dozen fighters (levels 3-8) and a pair of thieves (levels 5, 8), all of CE

alignment. The 8th-level thief, Retchen Sobibel, knows that Ishainken has documentary evidence which shows that Ivid's claim to the malachite throne is in some way compromised, and might—if drunk enough—give something away on this score. Sobibel doesn't know exactly what this is, but he knows Ishainken keeps it somewhere in Castle Redegian.

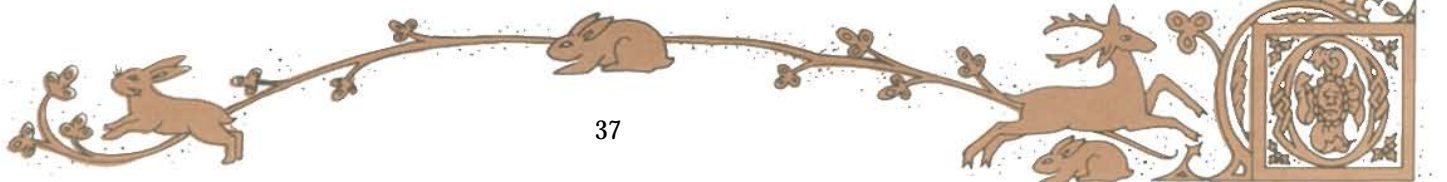
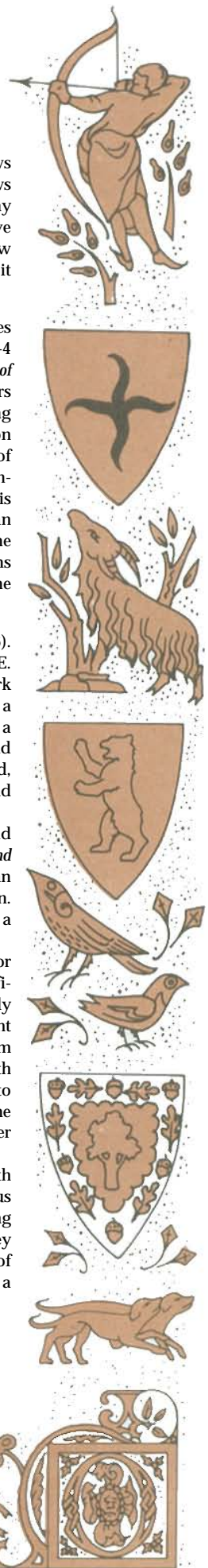
**Ivid V, Overking of Aerdy:** Animus with the abilities of 7th-level priest/14th-level mage (note: Con 4). AC -4 (*bracers of defense* AC 3, *ring of protection* +5, *cloak of displacement*), hp 33, AL NE. Ivid is biologically 52 years of age, although he looks terribly aged now. He has long abandoned his service as a priest of Hextor—a profession that had been forced on him by his father as a form of disciplining. He can no longer use priest spells. His insanity makes it 25% likely (+1% per level of spell) that his wizardly spellcasting attempts will simply fail. Ivid can call upon almost any magical items he wishes from the imperial treasuries, in addition to his ritual magical items and the *ring of spell turning* he always wears. Ivid's insane personality is fully documented above.

**Jipzinker:** 12th-level priest of Nerull (Str 15, Wis 16). AC 3 (*chain mail* +2, *ring of protection* +1), hp 66, AL NE. Jipzinker is 33 years old, 6' exactly, with thinning dark brown hair and slightly protuberant green eyes. He has a slight tremor in his hands and speaks with the hint of a stammer. He poses as a one-time dealer in art curios and Suloise relics, with sage proficiency in old Suloise legend, and he is deliberately inconspicuous in dress and behavior.

Jipzinker has access to many poisons and venoms and owns a *dagger of venom* in addition to *boots of striding and springing*, which are of old Suloise crafting. The boots can also cast a *fly* spell once a day for a one-hour duration. Add these to his *ring of invisibility*, and the man is a potent stealthy killer.


Jipzinker's dilemma is that he has had no orders for some time, and his acolyte-assassins are becoming difficult to keep in check. Jipzinker may soon start actively searching for the identity of other preceptors of Midnight Darkness—in addition to Marshevel of Rel Astra, whom he strongly dislikes and distrusts. He does not deal with Marshevel except when the Hidden Sickle orders him to do so. As the DM determines, Jipzinker might have some scraps of information that would interest player characters.

A campaign against Midnight Darkness can begin with the PCs attempting to locate and rout this dangerous priest, and it could end with the PCs either slaying Jipzinker and his acolytes, or by following them as they travel to locate other cells. The experience levels of Jipzinker's acolytes should be tailored to suit such a campaign.






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**Karoolck, Imperial Court Mage:** 19th-level mage (Dex 16, Con 15, Int 18). AC -9 (*bracers of defense* AC 2, *ring of protection* +4, *cloak of protection* +3, *fiend circlet*), hp 76, AL LE. Karoolck is 51 years old, 6' 2", very thin, with black hair, brown eyes, and an obvious lack of body hair. His limbs are extraordinarily thin, with his forearms no wider than his wrists. His hands are long-fingered, and his iron-hard nails are an inch in length.


Karoolck has many magical items within his tower, but he always carries a *ring of spell turning*, a *candle of invocation* (attuned to Baalzephon), a *staff of the magi* crafted from black wood in the form of a skeletal snake, and *wands of frost* and *polymorphing*.



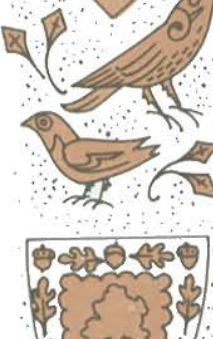
Karoolck first contacted a representative of Baalzephon when working in the Cauldron of Night. Baalzephon saw the mage as a perfect pawn/intermediary for his dealings with Ivid, and a pact was sealed. Karoolck will live, not aging, for up to 333 years, and he has "nine lives." Should he be slain, Baalzephon will dispatch a pit fiend to wish Karoolck back to life, up to nine times within the 333-year span. In return, the mage's soul belongs to Baalzephon, and the wizard must carry out his master's will when so instructed in affairs of state. Karoolck is vengeful and hateful, and does not forget enemies. With eight lives left, he is an enemy PCs will likely try to avoid.



Karoolck is currently researching Ivid's disease, trying frantically to find a cure. If he is successful, of course, this will radically alter the future of the Great Kingdom, and an adventure suitable for high-level PCs would involve thwarting Karoolck in this matter. The PCs would have to take steps to avoid the archmage learning who they are—else his attempt at revenge will be murderously powerful.



**Patriarch-General Pyrannden:** 17th-level priest (Str 18, Con 16, Wis 17). AC 1 (*chain mail* +4 of *fire resistance*, *ring of protection* +3, shield not used), hp 77, AL LE. Pyrannden is a brute of a man, 6' 2" tall, powerfully built, with dark brown hair cropped short and very dark brown eyes. Inevitably dressed in his black robes with white skull motifs, Pyrannden maintains favor with Ivid because of his work in creating animuses and because he knows exactly how to tell Ivid what he wants to hear. Pyrannden's political intriguing with Karoolck and the fiend-envoys of Baalzephon are wearing him out, as is the Iron Schism within his own church. He is 36 years old, but looks a good 15 years older.




At present, Pyrannden supports Ivid for fear of what another ruler might do. His orders to his underlings within Rauxes are to obey Ivid's decrees absolutely. Patriarchs outside Rauxes are expected to obey the local ruler of the area they are in, but to avoid any actions directly against the overking. Thus, Hextor's priests are told not to lead or command armies which plan to strike against the

imperial forces. Pyrannden is inclined, currently, to believe that only the Herzog of North Province can unify Aerdry. But there is a complication here. Herzog Grenell has a wholly independent church hierarchy in his province and has made it plain that he offers, and seeks, no alliance with Pyrannden until the Aerdry lands regain some kind of order.

Pyrannden also considers an alliance with Baalzephon possible, but he hates and distrusts Karoolck and has not dared risk any direct contact with Baalzephon. Karoolck has the great advantage that he can *gate*, but Hextor's priests cannot.

As a reaction to this uncertainty, which makes Pyrannden uncomfortable, he has ordered the priesthood to scour the land for whatever magical items they can come up with; through looting, exploration, even purchase. By hoarding magical relics and items, he hopes to strengthen the bargaining position of the church of Hextor with whoever becomes the major power-players in the lands.

Player characters might even find themselves well-paid for recovery of some such items, through an intermediary. They would not know—until it is too late—that they have been working in the service of Hextor!



**Rillikandren:** 9th-level mage/16th-level High Priest of Boccob (Int 18, Wis 18). AC 6 (*ring of protection* +4), hp 50, AL N. Rillikandren is 52, 6', slender of build, with black hair turned to white at the temples, a widow's peak, and gray eyes. He has an antique Bakluni *ring of true seeing*, a *staff of power*, and a number of *crystal balls* of diverse kind (with *clairaudience*, *clairvoyance*, X-ray vision, etc.). His acolytes include an 8th-level mage, a 6th-level priest, and a dual-classed 7th-level mage/7th-level priest.

Rillikandren is a scholar pure and simple, with a particular interest in unique magical relics (including those owned by the House of Naelax). He is probably the foremost authority in the eastern Flanaess on such items.

However, just about the only way to get him to reveal information about the objects is to offer the possibility of bringing another one to him (or actually doing so)—even if it is only for inspection and study.

Rillikandren possesses the Book of Hours. This work is said to have been traded to a peerless high priest of Boccob, Jarnzaydin of Jalpa, by an Avatar of Istus herself. It only reveals its contents to a priest of Boccob or Istus of 16th or higher level. Its pages are said to list the rulers and momentous events of Aerdry for many decades into the future.

Stealing it is pointless, since all truly high-level priests of Istus and Boccob (the only ones who can read it) would know from whom it had been taken. It is a certainty they would take steps to return it to its owner. However, there are no few mighty men who would seek to destroy the book if they knew its contents. From time to time, some

# Rauxes and the Lands of the Overking

conjured and commanded fiend, aerial servant, or such tries to enter Rillikandren's tower to do exactly this, and Karoolck is believed to both hate and fear Rillikandren greatly. Yet, the magical protection of the tower easily repel such intruders.

**Robann Peniaden:** Normal Man (Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 17), AC 10, hp 4, AL LN. Robann is 40 years old, 5' 6", brown-haired, brown-eyed, and pudgy. Robann does his best to represent merchants' interests to the Chancellery, the Town Guard, and others, and his charisma helps him get by. He's a decent, kindly man, genuinely concerned for the suffering of the starved and poor in Rauxes, which is why he stays, to help supplies of food and clothing get into the city. He has maps from old contacts among the offices of city planners and architects, and while he won't want to know about any plans for subversion, he's prepared to help anyone who he believes can help the ordinary people of the city.

## Magical Items

References have been made above to dark magical items supplied by Baalzephon to Ivid, and to unusual magical items possessed by some NPCs. The latter are dealt with first.

## Fiend Armor

Worn by more than a dozen commanding officers of the Companion Guard and a handful of military leaders outside of Rauxes, these are armors forged in hellish fires. Chain mail and plate mail versions are known to exist. They are wearable only by creatures of LE and NE alignments. Others donning the armor suffers 1d4 points of burning damage per round, double this if they are of good alignment. *Fiend armors* are worn by powerful warriors in the service of evil masters aligned with baatezu.

*Fiend armor* is usually of +2 or +3 enchantment. It confers the same resistances to attack modes as all baatezu possess: half damage from gas and cold attacks, and immunity to fire, contact poison, and nonmagical iron weapons. The wearer also gains magic resistance equal to 2% per experience level and becomes immune to magical alignment change. Finally, the wearer can *animate dead* once a week as if an 8th-level priest.

## Fiend Circlet

A *fiend circlet* is only given to a spellcaster who has made a formal pact of service to a baatezu lord (one of the Dark Eight), and are therefore very rare indeed. The wearer gains a +2 bonus to AC (if not wearing metal armor), and the resistances to attack forms and magical alignment change as per fiend armor. The following powers each

can be cast from a fiend circlet, three times a week: *advanced illusion*, *animate dead*, *charm person*, *infravision*, *know alignment*, *suggestion*.

## Dark Artifacts

The malachite throne and the unholy bloodshield are two of a number of magical artifacts possessed by the overking and those serving him. Such malign magics are either crafted with the aid of fiends, or have been revealed to the overking and his mages through the guidance of baatezu. A third example is the *spear of sorrow*, held by General Kalreth at Permanence. Other gazetteer chapters note one or two other such artifacts, and the magical sites (such as the Cauldron of Night and the Causeway of Fiends) from which they have been taken or crafted.

The DM is at liberty to craft additional artifacts as he wishes, using the ones described in this book as a benchmark. Other artifacts should not be overpowering, however, and they will only be held by rulers, priests, or mages of great power.

## The Fiend-Knights

The Fiend-Knights of Doom are an elite squad of warriors created from normal men by spellcraft on the part of both Ivid V himself, and Xaene, and also using mind-controlling magics crafted from baatezu relics. These servants are utterly, mindlessly loyal to the overking. Their statistics are:

ORGANIZATION: Group

ACTIVITY CYCLE: Any (do not need food or rest)

DIET: Do not require food

INTELLIGENCE: Very (11-12), rarely higher

TREASURE: Nil

ALIGNMENT: Any evil

NO. APPEARING: Variable

ARMOR CLASS: 10 (unarmored), see below

MOVEMENT: 12, 24 mounted

HIT DICE: 4d10 - 9d10+

THAC0: Variable

DAMAGE/ATTACK: By weapon type +3 or better

SPECIAL ATTACKS: Nil

SPECIAL DEFENSES: Immune to sleep, charm, hold spells and illusion/phantasm spells below 4th level

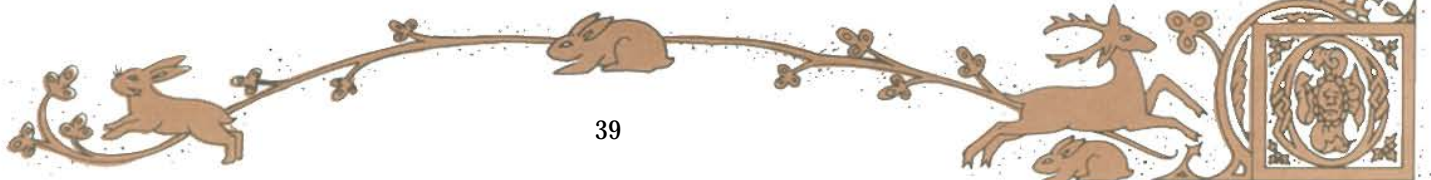
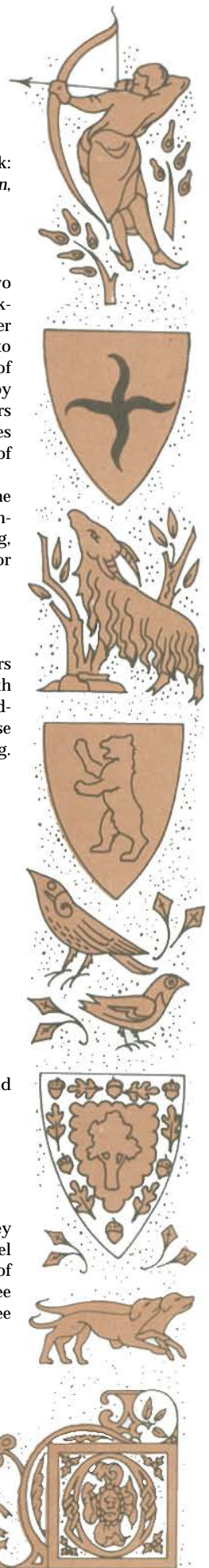
MAGIC RESISTANCE: Standard

SIZE: M (6'+)

MORALE: Fearless (20)

XP VALUE: Variable

Fiend-knights have the same number of hit dice as they had levels when mortal fighters. For example, a 5th level fighter would become a 5 HD fiend-knight. Nearly all of the fiend-knights are 10th level or below, with three exceptions—leaders of 11, 12, and 15 HD. These three





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leaders, and some dozen others, wear *fiend armor* +3 (plate mail). Others are 5% per level likely to wear magical plate mail (roll 1d10: 1-8, *plate mail* +1, 9, *plate mail* +2, 10, *plate mail* +3), else nonmagical plate. Fiend-knights always employ two-handed weapons, usually two-handed swords, and also composite longbows. Again, they are 5% per level likely to have magical weapons (roll as above, independently for each weapon type). Leaders always possess such items, and the 11+ HD leaders all possess powerful ones: a *sword of cold* +3; two-handed sword; and a *two-handed sword* +3, *giant slayer*.

The fiend-knights have high ability scores. All possess Strength scores of 18/01 or better, and have minimum Dexterity and Constitution scores of 15. No ability ever has a score below 9.

The current composition of the fiend-knights, in addition to their leaders, is:

Approximately 80 cavalry, 20 of whom ride undead steeds (treat as heavy warhorses with immunity to *sleep*, *charm* and *hold* spells), the other 60 riding normal heavy warhorses. These troops have heavy lances, again with a 5% chance per level for a magical lance, and they employ footman's flails in addition to two-handed weapons.

There are 120 heavy infantry, each of whom possesses long spears and a variety of pole arms in addition to other weaponry. They have a 2% chance per level for a magical pole arm.

As currently organized, the fiend-knights wear gold visors and have a heraldic emblem etched on to their armor over the heart. For cavalry, this is a tan horse, and for infantry it is a bronze baboon. The infantry are known as "The Howlers," for when they go into combat they howl and scream, hoping to strike fear into the hearts of their enemies.

Fiend-knights are not undead, and have none of the weaknesses of such (cannot be turned, etc.). They are simply wholly controlled humans, created by a precursor of the malign rituals which brought the animus to Oerth. The unfeeling nature of these fiend-knights, their insensibility to pain, and their "programmed" nature, make them alien and feared by all. Other of Ivid's troops hate and fear them, and loathe having to serve with them.

## Beyond The Capital

From Rauxes, troops and tax collecting militia have control over an area within a day's ride (one hex) and westward to Rifter. In a strip of land north of the Imeda, extending some 20 miles north and to within 20 miles of Gredlen to the east and almost to Paralad, the excellent farmlands are owned by Prince Ishainken. Elsewhere, the lands are a patchwork quilt of Ivid's own lands, royal trust lands, and smallholdings by minor Naelax Princes.

Royal trust lands are administered by Protectors.

Outside of major settlements, hamlets and large farmsteads are "protected" by prowling bands of militia. In trust lands, or Ivid's own landholdings, these are the King's Own Regulars; elsewhere, they are soldiery of the local landholder. The Naelax princelings obey the overking's troops when they visit, but they give no active support to the overking. They have their own petty squabbles in addition.

These militia are supposed to protect farmers, keeping bandits and mutinous soldiers at bay, and to extract appropriate taxes, tithes, and tolls on the *dirawaen* roads to Delaric and Roland. They generally do so, but in some areas the local rulers are uncaring, and the militia extract whatever monies and goods they can from those passing through—unless the passersby have guards and fighters of their own.

In Ishainken's lands, the militia are virtually autonomous given that their liege is almost always absent. They even fight among themselves for the privilege of raiding a farmstead or merchant when the opportunity arises. Rarely, a squad of Companion Guard may ride from Rauxes to inspect these lands and quell such mutinous behavior, and for a short time afterward order may be restored.

The northern trade road to Delaric is little traveled now, though trade from Roland along the *dirawaen* road to Gredlen (and downriver by barge to Orred, then on to Rauxes and also south to Jalpa and Torrich) is still a vital artery of supplies. Ores, salted fish, treated woods and ropes, and other goods flow to Rauxes. But as the coin of the capital declines, so will this trade.

## Locations and Settlements

### Castle Redegian

This is the family home of Prince Ishaiken of Naelax. Administered by his castellan Xeriquan in his absence, it is a forbidding, inhospitable place. Those approaching are routinely fired on by the castle's expert longbowmen. There are anchorages along the Imeda here for barges to stop over by night, but such is the reputation of the castle that few rivermen do this now. Among the castle's men is a rarity—the dwarf stonemason Walgrun Axebeard—who has built some unusual defenses into the castle. These consist of a dual exterior wall with collapsing sections, swivelling spike stoned tower battlements, and carefully hidden hammering and pummelling devices. The castle also has a *teleporter* system between its three towers and its great central keep, and a system of magical elevator rooms.

### Karellford

This village of 600 souls was once an important, if small,

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trading post for the fruits of the eastern Grandwood forest and for goods headed south from Eastfair and Delaric. Goods were then taken on to Rauxes and also used for provisioning The Phalanx.

Karellford was appropriated as a Royal protectorate under Ivid IV's ownership some 50 years ago in response to a trumped-up charge of treason against the local landowner, a mage. The mage was publicly burned, but not before he issued an appalling curse on his executioners.

The curse appears to have had some effect. Within a year, four of the Companion Guard who had stood beside the pyre died in "accidents." The next year, the Flanmi flooded and the fields around Karellford sprouted a growth of poisonous blue algae which rendered large swathes of good land infertile for many years. Local folk learned that the bite of a rat, ferret, or similar animal was almost always fatal. Domestic animals sometimes broke out into paroxysms of inexplicable violence, or else they wasted away and died. Stillbirths and premature deaths became increasingly common.

Despite an attempt at a ritual cleansing and lifting of the curse by a priest of Pholtus, these effects did not entirely abate, and in the past 30 years the population here has fallen from 1,200 to its present number. It is not just the decline of trade which gives this place its air of gloomy resignation. The local administrator, Branwenden, tries his best to cow and beat the villagers into sullen servitude. However, lately he has developed a severe neuralgia and a paralysis of the right side of his body. Even he fears to explore what might lie below the long-burned ruins of the mage's cottage and tower.

## Paralad

Paralad's 800 folk suffer the rule of the appalling Count Mardral Ishenvan. Mardral is one of Ivid's botched attempts at creating an animus; one of the initial guinea-pigs when the process had not been perfected. Unfortunately, Mardral's mind was shattered, and he is virtually autistic. In his fortified mansion house north of the village, Mardral has a huge tabletop model of Paralad and tiny stick figures of everyone living there. These enable him to re-enact battles he has taken part in (very few) or heard of. The majority of figures represent the local villagers.

Unfortunately, during these battles some of the figures break. When one does, Mardral at once orders the execution of the villager represented by the figure. His troops try their best not to carry these orders out, since sometimes the victims are their relatives, but of late Mardral has ordered the victims brought to him so that he can see that they are executed in the right way. Horribly, Mardral has them tied to great wooden stakes which are then smashed in exactly the same way as the stick

models were. As a result, many villagers already have fled, and half of Mardral's troops have deserted also. The rest only remain out of fear, or until they have acquired enough gold to pay for a berth on a barge headed far away—to Jalpa, perhaps, or to Sarndt and on to Nulbish.

Visitors (save for rivermen) had best beware: the soldiers here are desperate to rob anyone with significant amounts of money. If Mardral should espy the visitors, he will regard them as an invading army and construct stick models of them for his stick villagers to fight. He might order his own troops to round up such intruders and visit his home to play wargames with him. If he loses, he will sweep the figures from his table in a rage. If any figures representing the PCs are broken, Mardral will expect that the PCs in question offer themselves up for execution as a matter of etiquette.

DM Note: Mardral has the profile of an animus, save that he lacks the special powers of regeneration, *command*, *fear*, and has but a 17 Strength. He suffers triple damage from any silvered weapon which successfully strikes him—a side-effect of what was done to him.

## Orred

Orred is a town of major strategic importance. It is a natural trading-place, lying at the fork of the Flanmi-Imeda river system, and it has extensive wharves and warehouses. Orred lies on the Windmarch, with a traditional grand fair during the second week of Goodmonth. Its normal population of 5,500 usually triples during that time.

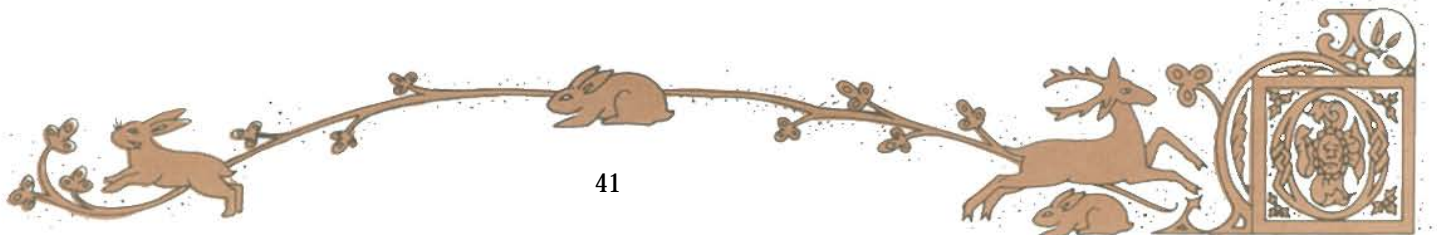
Orred has a garrison of 400 infantry and 100 cavalry in the service of Prince Lugrand of Naelax, who also owns the farmlands between the rivers for some eight miles northward. Lugrand is a cowardly, inept ruler who grovels to the overking's tax gatherers, but who has managed to prevent too many townspeople being conscripted into armies.

Orred has a bad reputation as a town beset by disease, plague, flooding and general infirmity, but this is actually just a feint on Lugrand's part to keep his people in the town. He doesn't care about them as people of course, he just wants to keep the tax and tithe revenues rolling into his own coffers. Nonetheless, the townsfolk think well of him because of his cunning.

Orred has a powerful thieves' guild and a deserved reputation for lax law enforcement. Life is cheap in the dock quarter of town, and even with the reduced volume of trade flowing through it now, men fight and murder to take their share of black market trade, contraband goods brought down from Smuggler's Walk or from Pardue and the south. Almost anything can be bought here if one has the money.

Orred has one special architectural feature of note.

In the declining years of the House of Rax, local nobles





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created statues of themselves for a competition held every five years, judged by the overking. To win the competition was deemed important, because it was thought to be an indication not that the statue was necessarily much good but, rather, that one was in the overking's favor. Over the decades, nobles began to make statues which came more and more to resemble a hybrid between themselves and an idealized image of the overking, hoping to curry favor.

Along Statuary Row, there are more than a hundred of these statues (mostly weathered bronze), growing more and more affected and postured as one moves along. A young mage placed magic mouths on some of them, generally inviting youthful maidens to remove personal garments as they pass by.

Statuary Row is, however, an important public meeting-place for making contacts with merchants, rivermen, and thieves for black market dealings over a mug of the fine local ale, seated in the shade of the trees which line the broad boulevard.

## The Phalanx

These stone keeps command lands owned by Ivid, which extend 20 to 30 miles south of the Flanmi. They are occupied by garrisons of 50-100 of the King's Own Regulars, and discipline in most of them is good. However, the two easternmost keeps have rather unusual problems.

In the keep on the bend of the Flanmi, Ivid ordered the previous garrison leader executed for an imagined treason and signed an imperial edict to place another in charge. Unfortunately, Ivid's deranged scrawl was mis-read by the acting garrison commander (who could barely read anyway). He thought that the name was that of Connors, a famous imbecile-jester the troops had mocked for years. Daring to make enquiries of the palace authorities, the acting commander was thrown out with a furious yell of, "if that's who it says, then it's he who should be in command—not you, you oaf!"

As a result, Connors the Wise (as he styles himself) now administers this keep, to the stunned incredulity of everyone there. Connors recently proclaimed such feast days as The Feast of the Celestial Chicken, and The Feast of the Trout-Tickling Harbinger of Doom. However, one thing which can be said for Eel-Handler Keep (as it has been proclaimed), is that no one gets executed there, and the troops don't suffer the regular floggings that Connors's predecessor meted out. So they are getting used to it.

Some wonder whether perhaps Connors is an insane close relative of Ivid. Indeed, Connors hints at this from time to time. He may be mad, but he's no fool, and he knows when he's on to a good thing.

The situation at the next keep is much worse, again due to mistaken orders. A spinagon baatezu was commanded

by Karoolck to convey a magical wand of unique design to the safekeeping of the senior priest of Hextor here. The baatezu misunderstood its orders and used the item to slay the priest and all but a half-dozen of the castle troops. The keep is thus deserted and no troops will enter it if they know anything of events there—even on pain of death. Leprous, bloated corpses floated down the Flanmi for weeks after the baatezu's orgy of slaying. Worse still, the disease- and death- dealing wand is somewhere within the keep, for the baatezu never returned.

Stinking yellow fogs and an orange scum floating downriver from this keep have been sighted during the winter months, and white-faced troops and farmers have reported seeing misty wolves as white as ice padding silently around the river bank and keep. Even a detachment of eight Companion Guard who entered in Patch-wall did not return from their investigations. Some whisper that the keep must have been built on the sacred site of the Ur-Flannae, and that some ancient curse has been revived by the bloodshed.

## Rifter

Powerfully reinforced with 80-foot walls surrounding the keep, mighty ballista platforms atop it, and many magical defenses against intrusion and magical assault built into its walls, Rifter is a truly imposing structure. It was built by Ivid II at a time when he felt the need for an impregnable "bunker" retreat if he was ever faced with the need to evacuate Rauxes. This was at a time when the overking was especially paranoid, even by Naelax standards. This keep is manned by 200 elite soldiers of Imperial Regulars and a detachment of 20 Companion Guard, with 15 fiend-knights protecting the dungeons below the keep should Ivid ever have to retreat there. It is whispered that a *sphere of annihilation* controllable only by Ivid himself is kept as an ultimate weapon within these dungeons.

Rifter also houses the war apparatus known as the *machine of Lum the Mad*. This artifact appears as a siege tower of no great size, but has an extraordinary range of magical powers (including *chain lightning*, *fire storm*, *meteor swarm*, *transmute rock to mud*, etc.) It only can be operated by a mage of at least 16th level with an 18 or higher Intelligence. Unfortunately, the last wizard to know the full range of command words for activating the many levers, switches and dials within this construct was Xaene, and now only some half of the functions can be used. An expert (16th level) diviner, Anaranth is currently researching the artifact.

Finally, Rifter takes its name from its construction within a half-mile of a narrow (10' across, 25' long) rift in the earth which appears to descend for miles, although it is always smoke-filled and magical scrying does not reveal what lies below. A permanent *prismatic sphere* has been placed above it to prevent anything emerging. One

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might wonder why anyone should wish to build a keep so close to such a hazard. The answer is that with *hallucinatory terrain* to disguise it, and spells such as *telekinesis* to propel siege engines and people into it should Rifter be besieged, was deemed a very useful feature by the mage-architect who advised Ivid III on the best site to construct this place.

## Triumph/Wendarn

The absurdly-named castle, Triumph, is of very recent construction. There are stone quarries nearby, and Ivid commanded slave laborers, criminals, and serfs to toil night and day to build it. The castle walls bear great carvings showing Ivid's imagined military triumphs in the Nyron campaign, but the castle itself was shoddily built (the laborers having no building skills), and one of the four towers is already beginning to show signs of collapse.

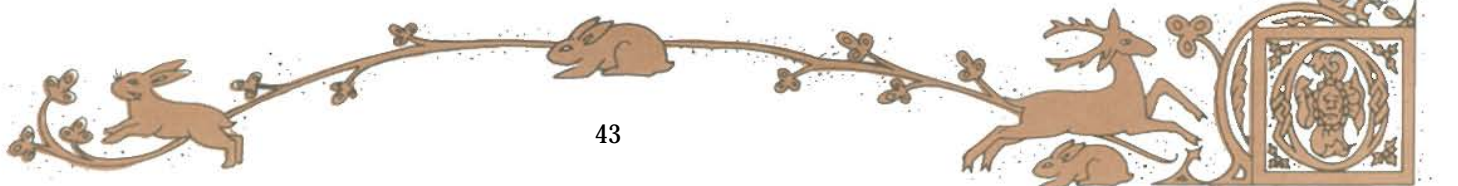
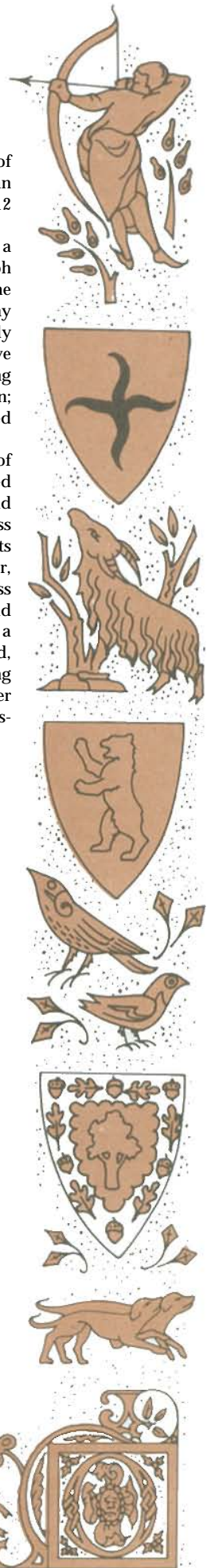
The garrison commander, Gregern Damarain, is charged with assembling the villagers of Wendarn on the first Starday of each month to re-enact some victory from the war, which Ivid views with a *crystal ball*. Gregern has learned from bitter experience that, however faithfully he tries to do this, Ivid usually despatches a force of some 50 Companion Guard to execute some of the participants for not meeting his requirements.

Gregern and most of his men would have deserted and fled north long ago if not for the ownership of a *ring of*

*human control* by the castle's resident senior priest of Hextor, who also possesses a magical rod which can summon and command an aerial servant for 12+2d12 hours, once a week. Escape attempts are thus futile.

The priest, Ratikinn Durvan, protects himself with a force of 10 orogs and 20 orcs who prowl around Triumph as if they own the place. The human soldiers here, some 300 in total, are close to mutinying and rising up to slay the orcs, but one initial abortive attempt to do this simply resulted in 22 slain soldiers and an extra defensive phalanx of zombies around the priest. Anyone slaying Ratikinn would earn the loyalty of Gregern and his men; they are evil, but most are Lawful, and if they pledged service they would be true to their word.

Wendarn is important as a toll point on the junction of the *dirawaen* roads, and as a tithe barn village. Tithed crops from local farms are stored in barns and warehouses here, and the "Wendarn minx" is a tailless species of feral cat much appreciated in the village for its work in keeping vermin out of the grain stores. However, rather surprisingly given the number of people who pass through here, Wendarn folk are extremely insular and xenophobic. Intermarriage over centuries has produced a population with a large number of enfeebled, half-witted, and even sociopathic peasants. Along the roads leading to and from the village, "As like to meet a Wendarner with the right number of fingers" is a widely-used expression meaning, roughly, "Once in a blue moon."







## North Province

Pop.: 830,000 + 25,000 humanoids (approx)  
Capital: Eastfair (pop. 31,000 + 3,000 humanoids)  
Ruler: His Radiant Grace Grenell, Herzog of the North  
Rulership: Variable  
Cost Multiplier: 140%

### The Lay of the Land

North Province has seceded from the Great Kingdom and considers itself an independent nation-state. Military units no longer wear imperial heraldry, and the Herzog's administrators are busy drawing up designs for new coinage, new heraldic symbols, and other badges of a young nation. However, everyone knows that what happens within North Province will be affected by what happens elsewhere in Aerdy.

Grace Grenell is in a very difficult position politically. During the Greyhawk Wars he allied with the humanoids of the Bone March out of desperation. This alliance was successful in forcing a stalemate which created peace, but a very tense legacy has been left behind.

The Bone March humanoids are not a single coalition with one overall warlord. The Euroz orcs are the dominant tribe, however, and it is with them that Grenell made alliance. So far, different warlords among the Euroz have not indulged in their traditional intertribal warfare within North Province, but that is probably just a matter of time. In any event, matters are difficult enough already.

Humanoid armies in some numbers are still stationed in Eastfair, Bellport and elsewhere within the northern and western regions of North Province. A war to drive them back to the Bone March would be ruinous to North Province at the present time. What's more, Grenell desperately needs the ores which are supplied from the mines of Bellport. Coin minted with these ores is accepted for trade by the Sea Barons, the Twin Cities, and for imports from points south. The humanoids have massed armies which are encamped in strong defensive positions in and around those mines; the orcs have their hands around North Province's throat, as it were, and Grenell knows it.

So, this alliance has to be maintained, but the orcs and other humanoids want to get something in return. Specifically, they are now calling in the debt: "We helped you fight Nyron, now you help us storm Ratik."

For himself, Grenell doesn't give a fig about Ratik. Unfortunately, no few of his most powerful local rulers care a great deal about Ratik—as do many ordinary folk. Many of them share the same Oeridian-Flan racial mix as the men of Ratik, and they admire the rugged bravery of Ratik's warriors in having kept the humanoids at bay for so long. They are opposed to any plan to conquer Ratik, and some of them are ready to go and fight for Ratik should Grenell dare act against that nation.

There is another twist to this. The barbarian nations are strongly allied with Ratik. At the present time, their raids are focused on the Sea Barons and they do not often raid most points along the eastern North Province seaboard, save for Bellport. This is because many of the rulers and armies of that eastern seaboard have managed to make a peace of sorts with the fierce Flan barbarians, Prince Elkerst of Atirr being a notable example. Indeed, the barbarians increasingly trade with some North Province coastal towns and villages, and that trade brings much-needed wood, furs, and other commodities in short supply in North Province.

If Grenell helped the humanoids against Ratik, the barbarians would certainly begin their raids again, and trade would cease. Grenell can't really afford to have either of these things happen.

Grenell has some supporters, else he would not be able to sustain his position. Patriarch Halldrem of Bellport is a church ruler, and the church of Hextor owns Arrowstrand and the lands around it, with a few other minor fiefdoms in North Province. Princes Hastern of Edge Field, and his liegeman Rinsbern (with lands to the northeast of that town), have humanoid soldiers they use to pillage the Adri. The pair support the alliance with the Bone March. Hastern has offered Grenell a possible escape route; use the humanoids to march on Rauxes itself in a great orgy of pillaging. This plan appears to offer Grenell the best way out of his dilemma, but even the Herzog balks at marching more than 300 miles to depose his cousin. He is also unsure of the attitudes of a string of Naelax princes who own the lands around the Flanni to the south. Few support Ivid, some openly voice their hatred of him, but Grenell knows all too well that they are utterly unprincipled and treacherous. Their troops, and provisioning, would be vital to any plan to march on Rauxes.

There is a final twist. Grenell does not have the military might to march on local rulers he would like to subdue. With thousands of orcs in armies along his western frontier, Grenell simply cannot risk internecine war among the human armies of North Province. It would weaken the control Grenell has too much, and it would make the orcs feel more confident about attacking a divided human enemy. Grenell might take control of some small estate in such a manner—but he might lose Bellport, the northwest, even Eastfair itself, to invading orcs if he used this tactic.

Thus, the political situation in North Province is very tense and dangerous. Some humanoid forces have already struck off on their own and have begun to pillage the northwestern fringe lands where the intransigence of Baron-General Shalaster infuriates them. Mercenaries are increasingly attracted to trouble spots, finding no few rulers ready to protect their lands with armed resistance to any marauding humanoids or bandits. The level of



# North Province

rulership in any local area is generally "medium" or better, but the conflicts between those rulers threaten to plunge North Province into a civil war every bit as bitter as the Turmoil Between Crowns. There is no organized resistance to Grenell, and most thank him for getting North Province out of the Great Kingdom just in time. But some new alliances are just beginning to emerge, and Shalaster and his excellent army are a possible focal point for a new style of rulership in these lands.

## Trade

Some of North Province's trade has been referred to above. Trade is crucial to North Province, for outside of the Flanmi River basin the land is often poor, stony, and offering low crop yields. Livestock farming dominates most areas, and theft of livestock is a capital offense. Fishing is another major resource North Province possesses, and the whalers of Kaport Bay know all too well that the barbarians of the north could decimate that industry all too easily if they chose. Fish are a vital part of the food supply now. After years of war, the poor farmlands of North Province have been inadequately sewn and harvested and resources of grain and vegetables are low. Without the fish brought in from the east coast, usually salted or pickled, many folk in North Province could starve.

The Adri forest is the remaining economic resource of major importance. Edge Field is a vital city, with many soldiers protecting raiding parties into the Adri seeking game, slaves, and the wood of which most southern and western homes are built. Farther north, there is a fair supply of slate and stone. Even humble farm laborer's dwellings are usually made of stone in those regions. However, the stone is rarely of exportable quality, and those lands which might need it can find sellers nearer to where they are.

So far as importing foreign goods goes, the supply line from the south—the great Flanmi artery of trade—has dried up beyond Darnagal. Once, even Hepmonaland silks and spices reached Eastfair by this route, but no one could hope to sail the full length of the Flanmi safely now. Atirr has become the most important supply port for goods from the far south, which has made that city more important politically, as Grenell is only too well aware.

## Taxes and Tithes

Grenell imposes whatever taxes and tithes he thinks he can get away with. That depends on the military strengths, and the steeliness, of the various local rulers. The situation is tough, but not desperate, for Grenell. He can always count on the support of the church lands of Hextor's priesthood. And the support of the ruler of Edge

Field is crucial to him.

## Faiths and Priesthoods

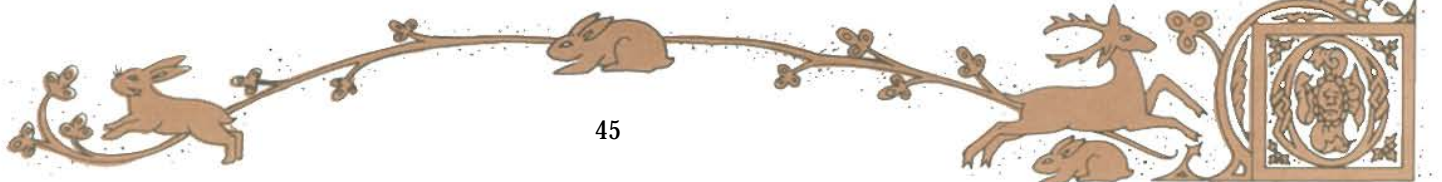
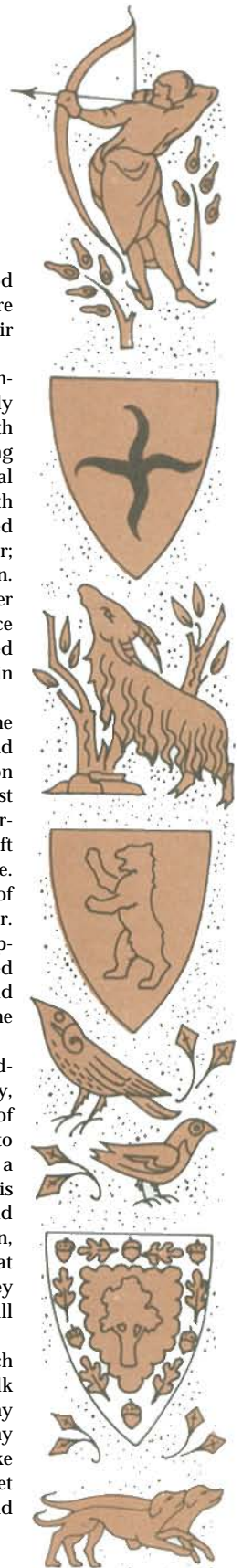
Grenell himself is a priest of Hextor, and this priesthood is the politically dominant one in North Province. There are, however, some complex aspects to their preeminence.

When Ivid I negotiated the various deals which accompanied his ascension to the throne, he was extremely cunning in the way in which he dealt with North Province. The Herzog was explicitly designated as ruling North Province spiritually and temporally. Spiritual preeminence effectively meant imposing on North Province the values of Lawful Evil. Here, Ivid I granted all that the priesthood of Hextor could have wished for; absolute prominence in such matters—without question. Ivid could cede this, because he knew full well that other faiths of importance among the people of North Province were not "political" faiths or churches. Though it sounded grand, the awarding of this primacy gave little away in practice.

In matters temporal, Ivid granted authority to the Herzog of the time to make land grants and set taxes and tithes—in practice. Ivid pleaded that this concession could not be laid down in a formal treaty, but must remain the subject of a perpetual, but informal, understanding. The Herzog accepted this. But the hole it left concerned the military and the armies of North Province. Ivid I retained formal rights over them in the treaties of the time, so that he could call upon them in times of war. What was never written into any treaty was an acceptance that the Herzog would be the unquestioned supreme leader of these armies in times of peace. Ivid never laid any claim to such leadership himself; the matter was simply never formalized.

The result of this is simple. The elite military commanders of North Province traditionally have been hereditary, and of Oeridian-Flan blood. Some have been resentful of the primacy of Hextor's faith, and thus unwilling to accept that priests should lead warriors and armies. As a result, the military elite has often kept the Herzog and his priesthood at arm's length, arguing their own case and maintaining some degree of independence. In addition, many senior military leaders are extremely unhappy at the alliance with humanoids, since they believe that they have much in common with the men of Ratik. This all adds to Grenell's discomfiture.

Too, North Province has a broader set of faiths which have at least a moderate following among common folk than elsewhere in Aerdy. Procan is important to many eastern people, and Fharlanghn is respected by many who travel the lands, even at sea. Some merchants invoke him as a protector, in addition to Zilchus, when they set out over long distances. In the northernmost lands and







# North Province

some of the best farmlands, the old Flan Powers of Berei and Zodal are invoked together with Beory by many; homely faiths, those of family, farming, and hope for better times. None of the priesthoods of these powers challenges that of Hextor, but the faith of the Herzog has to accept that they have their place nonetheless.

Lastly, Grenell and the priesthood of Hextor generally do not deal with baatezu or any fiends, save for Patriarch Verminek (see below). They are all too aware of Ivid's bargains with fiends and believe this to be part and parcel of his madness. They dare not follow the awful example he has set.

## The Navy

North Province does not have a navy of any significant size. In the pacts accompanying Ivid I's ascension, naval strength was almost exclusively ceded to the Sea Barons, who used eastern ports as naval bases while keeping control of the war galleys of Aerdy firmly to themselves. However, following the fall of the Lordship of the Isles, offering new threats to the south, and the increased need of the Sea Barons for their own vessels to fend off barbarian raids, some seaboard cities have begun building military vessels and establishing their own squadrons. This is a piecemeal affair, and the Herzog has no formal control over the navy—or, more accurately, navies. These small squadrons lack any centralized command, unlike the armies of North Province.

## Beyond North Province

Grenell is concerned with only two Aerdy lands, save for Rauxes itself; the broad swathe of Naelax lands to the south and the Twin Cities. Grenell must keep peace with the rulers of Rinloru and Winetha. He cannot afford conflict in the east and south as well as the problems the humanoids pose him north and west. Grenell can hardly send any emissary to Rinloru's frightful ruler, but as yet there seems no threat from that quarter. North Province maintains plenty of spying keeps on the borders of Delglath's lands, however. Overtures to the Council of Wizards in Winetha have met with a cool response. Prince Lakaster of that city doesn't care at all about North Province, but some Winethan goods flow to North Province and that trade is good for all. Grenell judges that it is not in Lakaster's interests to precipitate any conflict, though he wishes that the ruler there was more aggressive toward the barbarians. That might take some of the heat off North Province.

## Eastfair, The Granite City

Eastfair is a walled city built from the same granite that can be found around the headwaters of the Flanmi near

the huge underground aquifers and water tables. The city lies almost at the end of the Windmarch as it turns north from Orred, and the traditional Brewfest Great Fair is a week-long orgy of self-indulgence and debauchery. From Eastfair northward, a number of minor villages hold Windfair trade fairs later in the year, but these have now declined in importance as trade has dwindled.

Eastfair is not what it appears to be. The city seems hard, stark, stern in its cloak of granite walls. The city has an air of discipline (rulership level is high), and the town guard and detachments of the Rakersmen (elite troops of North Province) maintain excellent public order. While it has a reputation for urbanity, ordinary folk in the city work hard. The streets are clean, and there are no dingy Thieves' Quarters or filthy slums to offend the eye.

However, Eastfair has always attracted the most debauched and degenerate nobility and merchants of North Province. The merchants have only city-based guilds in North Province (the Royal Guild of Merchants having no license to operate or organize here), and Eastfair is the city which draws the wealthiest. Goods always have been expensive here (add 10% to all prices, additional to the provincial Cost Multiplier). Thus, Eastfair attracts wealth. These riches are either inherited, or else obtained by the best merchants—that is, the most unscrupulous, swindling, money-grabbing ones. Given this, it is not surprising that Eastfair's rich like to spend their money on depraved and immoral activities.

Nonetheless, Eastfair has a considerable number of truly exceptional craftsmen and artisans within its city walls. Their number has been swollen by people seeking refuge in the Granite City from more troubled lands and cities. Now, truly, Eastfair is a city where one can buy almost anything—if one has almost limitless supplies of gold.

## Threats to Security

Despite the general atmosphere of firm control, Eastfair has its problems. One which it does not have is thieves—or, at least, not in any great number. The penalties for thievery are very stern. Theft of goods above 500 gp value means execution here, and even for a theft above 25 gp, the minimum sentence is two years imprisonment. Thus, despite the presence of abundant rich pickings, thieves are few and far between. Only a handful of very skilled solitary operators are to be found here, not any formal thieves' guild.

One major problem arises from the presence of the Euroz "Angry Army," as they style themselves. The orcs are often drunk, chafing at their having to live behind city walls, and their own leaders cannot maintain discipline that well. The location key below details the orcs here.

The other major problem is far more unusual. The Web has two cells of spies acting independently here. One cell,

# North Province

of five people led by a male 9th-level mage, Cronkarn Elsoet, received as its last set of orders from Rauxes an urgent need to infiltrate and round up an anti-imperial group which specialized in "magical subversion" (controlling important townsfolk by *charm*, *hypnotism*, etc.). Magical control was said to be used to sabotage Eastfair's city defenses, such as the Great Gate and the city walls. The infiltration strategy used by this cell called for magical sabotage against precisely those city defenses, in an attempt to flush out the real subversives.

The second cell, led by a 9th-level female mage, Petrella Huisarn, received garbled instructions to flush out an anti-imperial group which was directly employing sabotage against Eastfair's city defenses. Their strategy has been to *charm* and *hypnotize* (etc.) city servants connected with the integrity of the city's defenses, in an attempt to gain inside knowledge of these subversive actions and track down those responsible.

The actual truth is that there are no anti-imperial subversives trying to sabotage Eastfair, but the two cells are committing magical crimes which convince the other cell that there are, indeed, dangerous subversives at work. To date, neither cell has managed to track down members of the other cell, so they continue their own sabotages. In addition, they occasionally use kidnap and extortion, or robbery, to maintain finances (since no monies have been forthcoming from Rauxes for a long time).

The authorities in Eastfair are mystified. What magical scrying they can bring to bear on the matter has yielded no information (since cell members are protected against magical discovery).

## Location Key

Eastfair is divided into Old City and New City. The Old City was built circa 80 CY, and the city greatly expanded in size during the third century when New City began to grow outside the original walls. Old City is now mostly the province of the poorer people, save for the complex of buildings known as "The Cyst," while New City contains the homes and workplaces of the well-off.

For PCs approaching Eastfair, their first sight of the city should give them an impression of grandeur. Huge granite walls confer an air of invulnerability, and the stone spires and slate roofs of the buildings inside crowd together like a phalanx of powerful defenders. Great Gate, bearing its mighty shields of Hextor and North Province, is a forbidding entrance to this majestic city.

The DM has liberty to add locations to Eastfair as he desires. The locations listed below are those of major importance within the city, and they deliberately allow ample room for expansion. The DM is given enough detail to set adventures and scenarios (such as those in the **Whispers and Ventures** chapter) here.

## 1. Great Gate

Great Gate is powerfully defended, with ballista platforms flanking the 30' high granite walls and a pair of huge (22' high) stone statues of Aerdy warriors standing one each side of them. These statues can be animated as massive stone golems (200 hp each) by a priest of Hextor of 9th or higher level to fight in defense of the city. They also can be commanded to *meld into stone* into the city walls, and if this is done all defenders on the battlements gain a -1 bonus to AC for as long as one or both of the statues remain so melded.

An entry toll is charged of 1 sp a person (1 gp a merchant or freesword, with extra charges of 1 sp to 1 gp for each horse, wagon, etc.). The main gates are opened for wagons and horse, with men on foot using smaller side-doors at the base of the ballista towers. Within Great Gate, the broad boulevard known as The Full Path stretches into the heart of the city and on to Newgate and Spider's Gate. Just beyond Great Gate, the extraordinary sight simply named "Waterfall" greets the visitor; 20' high, 10' long standing waves of water lie either side of The Full Path, a permanent magical reminder that Eastfair lies just north of the headwaters of the Flanmi.

## 2. Fisherman's Gate

The north gate of the city is much smaller than Great Gate, and receives only visitors on foot or on horse in small numbers. Originally, this was the gate used by humbler tradesmen, hence its name, but in a reversal of history this gate now opens into the richer areas of the city and merchants are sent to Great Gate if they seek entry.

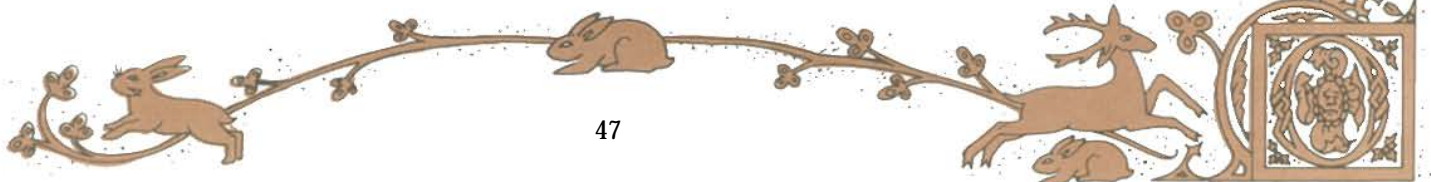
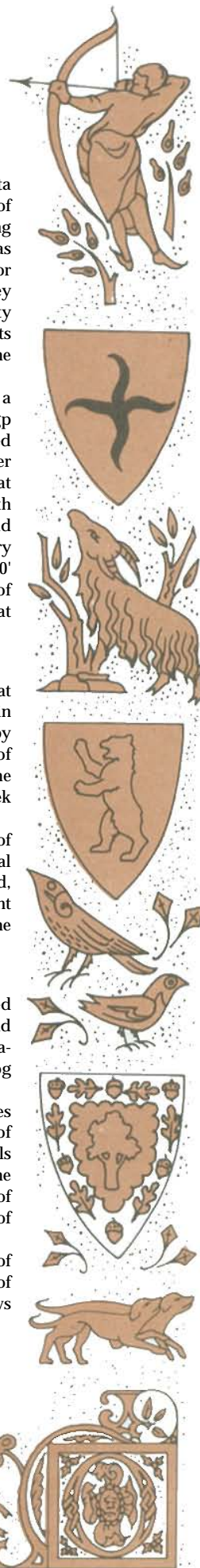
Though this gate has not the powerful defenses of Great Gate, the gatehouse here contains a minor magical artifact which, if the right command word is activated, can shield the gate in a *wall of stone* which is 90% resistant to any attempts to *dispel* it, save by use of the same artifact used to create it.

## 3. The Cyst

The Cyst comprises three sets of buildings located behind iron railings protected by priests of Hextor and squads of Rakersmen. None can enter without an invitation or the summons or granted pass of the Herzog himself.

The central building here, the Herzog's Palace, houses Grace Grenell and the hierarchy of the priesthood of Hextor, together with the most senior city officials (Chancellor, city architect, Commander-General of the Watch, etc.). To the right of the Palace are the barracks of the Rakersmen, with some 600 troops and a dozen of their most senior commanding officers.

The great Cathedral of Hextor completes the set of constructions. This imposing church contains statues of great Aerdy warriors, superb stained-glass windows





# North Province

showing battle scenes, commemorative friezes and murals depicting victories of Oeridians over humanoids, Flan, and others. Access is restricted to the Herzog, his senior assistants, and those powerful folk within Eastfair known to be active worshipers of Hextor. Undead guardians throng the temple, and leaders of the orcs in the city are admitted—but only rarely, and at such times the murals depicting their kin being slain are carefully covered up with wall hangings. Sacrificial rituals are practiced here but rarely, and then only in the basements which are whispered to hold a handful of prisoners whom Grace Grenell values too highly to leave rotting in the city jail.

## 4. Newgate

This city gate restricts access to New City. Save for priests and senior military men, few of the people of Old City are allowed to enter here, though passage in the reverse direction is free-flowing. Dwellers in New City are given passes to show their place of residence and are allowed to return there freely after visiting Old City.

## 5. Spider's Gate

This is so named because the buildings immediately beyond it, in New City, have traditionally belonged to merchants dealing in specialty goods—principally silks from the far south, spun by pupae and silk spiders. Now, passage is restricted to Old City folk unless they work for merchants in the area immediately beyond, in which case they bear badges showing their trade and passes allowing them entrance.

## 6. The Glorious Griffin

This tavern is known to be frequented by the handful of thieves in Eastfair. The most notable of their number is Sheleern Valander. The thieves always drink and sup in the private rooms of the tavern's cellars, which are also favored by New City men and women making adulterous liaisons. The Glorious Griffin appears down-at-heel, and its first floor bars and serveries providing humble fare fit this appearance. However, patrons who know the proprietress, Kristern Delglanden, well know to flip her a couple of gold for admittance to such secret trysts. Her huge half-orc bodyguards, Gordreth and Enkrist, protect the entrance to the basements, and also operate carefully concealed levers to open secret doors releasing the subterranean intriguers into the streets of Old City should the need arise.

## 7. Gloria's

Owned by a feisty, sociable, funny woman from Atirr, Gloria's is a hostelry which is a haunt of mercenaries seeking employment throughout North Province. Gloria is on good terms with many of the nobles of North Province, and she is often visited by them if they have to come to Eastfair for any reason. Certainly, their Captains-

General or equivalent troop leaders come here fairly often looking for freeswords or mages available for hire. Gloria's home-brewed blastenbeer is famed throughout the city. Herbal preparations made from flora of the Adri Forest produce and prepared in a recipe only she knows make this a murderously potent brew. Eastfair's handful of dwarves (mostly exiles from the Blemu Hills) frequent this establishment and favor this brew greatly. Among their number are hill and mountain dwarves who know the Blemu Hills and the southern Rakers like the backs of their work-calloused hands. Anyone seeking a guide to those dangerous terrains should make this hostelry a first port of call.

## 8. The Square of Sun by Moon

This paved town square sees its fair share of drunken brawls in the early hours when the taverns have emptied, but on the fourth day of Richfest—when Luna and Celene the Handmaiden are both full in the sky—the people of Eastfair come out at night with blazing torches in an age-old ritual in which a full-scale model of a barbarian sailing ship is burned here, with a full crew of effigy seamen. Much ale is drunk, and pork and goat's-meat sausages dripping with fat are bought from street vendors and wolfed down. The ritual is one celebrating death and rebirth, an invocation to the powers that be to allow safe passage to the souls of those who die in the coming year, and to bestow their blessings on those babes born during the same time.

Those setting light to the ship wear furs and regalia typical of barbarians, emphasizing the kinship of many people with the Flan people of the north lands.

## 9. The Whirling Dervish

Nested in the Streets of Delight, the Whirling Dervish is a hostelry offering entertainments marginally less depraved, and more varied, than most establishments around it. The proprietor, Clinorus Kradner, dresses in Bakluni robes and a turban, even though he's never been west of Edge Field in his life. But he plays the part well, and has a range of "mystical conjuring tricks of the exotic west" aided by the small-time magic his talent as a 3rd-level mage gives him (*hypnotism, phantasmal force*, etc.). His dancing girls are the best trained in Eastfair, and his other attractions include "Kumbli, the strongest man living outside Ekbir" (a shaven-headed tanned Pontyler exile with 18/95 Strength), boas from Hepmonaland trained to curl lazily out of their wicker baskets when Clinorus plays his out-of-tune conch-pipe, vividly-colored liqueurs of brain-numbing potency, dice-game tables, and far more besides.

Climorus is, in fact, a priest of Olidammara, with a strong tendency to good alignment. He is always interested in new visitors among his clientele, and if he spots good-aligned people he will often go out of his way to

# North Province

give them some tips on who, what, and where to avoid within Eastfair. He overhears indiscretions mumbled by drunken nobles and others at his gaming tables, and might pass on something of what he has heard—for the right price—if he trusts the individual he is dealing with. This is a good location to steer PCs to, if the DM wishes to tip them off about something they may not know, or if they are missing some important piece of information.

## 10. The Pikeman

Frequented by senior military men, and a few mages around the city, this hostelry is the place to visit if one seeks employment by rulers and nobles within or close to Eastfair. The resident halfling chef is famed for his goat's chitterlings (intestines) in garlic and herb aspic. The Pikeman has two suites of rooms which are enchanted to be 70% resistant to all divination magics, and as such are regularly occupied by out-of-town nobility and their representatives when confidential negotiations are at a premium.

## 11. The Noble Herzog

This hostelry is frequented by the truly powerful in Eastfair; on occasion by the Herzog himself, but more often by his priest-lieutenants, members of Marshal Sasquand's retinue, or by powerful regional nobles or Eastfair such as Verminek or Finelkla the Illusionist. Non-members are admitted only on payment of 30 gp, and all weapons must be left in the care of the huge, *charmed* ogre bodyguards and warriors. Membership is by invitation only. Non-members are normally only admitted if accompanied by a member, or on Blachten nights of mortal combat in the Deep Pit of the hostelry, when gladiators entertain jaded sadist voyeurs with mortal combats, against each other or—for high fees—against monsters dragged down from the Blemu Hills or even the Rakers. Fees for these fight nights may be very high, but they may have to be paid if one wants to rub shoulders with the truly eminent and powerful. Of late, orcs from the city garrison have become increasingly available for such contests, and the Noble Herzog's proprietress, Shaobhell Ishandrenn, has become a wealthy woman as a result.

On rare and special occasions, priests of Hextor officiate at special-event nights with murderous rituals which do not bear explicit description here. Suffice it to say that innocents of tender age vanish from Eastfair's streets shortly before these events, and those who attend the events need no appetite for rich banquets for a day or two afterwards.

## 12. Morrkend's

This shop has a dilapidated exterior, and appears to be a humble herbalist's store. The proprietor doesn't advertise the fact, but he is a superb enchanter. Morrkend supplies Grenell with one magical weapon each year,

usually of +3 enchantment, as a tithe. The rest of the year, he works for whoever pays him best—not with gold, but with rarities such as giant sinews, dragon blood and teeth, doppleganger ichor, and the like. Morrkend knows how to enchant virtually any non-unique item, and it is even said that he crafted the singing *defender sword* of Elkerst of Atirr.

Morrkend trades a little in magical items, and PCs may be able to exchange these here if the DM allows this in his campaign. The enchanter also has a number of maps of the southern Rakers and Blemu Hills, even a few sites in the Corusks, where magical monsters can be found; he seeks their blood, claws, etc., as materials for his work.

Morrkend is a good patron NPC the DM can use to send PCs on perilous adventures outside Aerdy.

## 13. Verminek's Residence

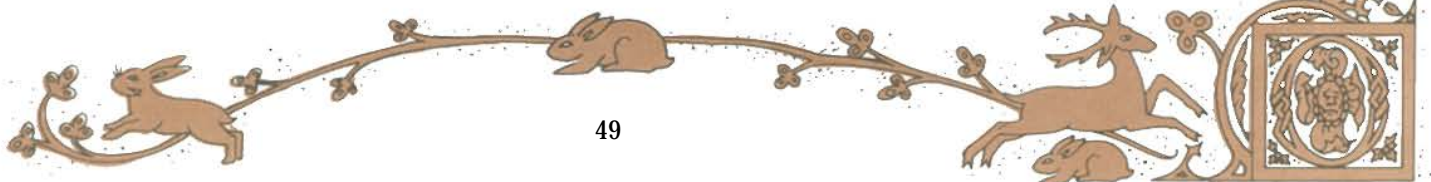
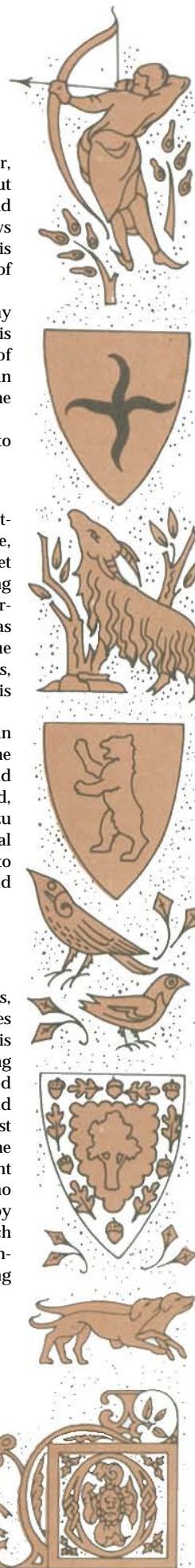
Verminek is something of a maverick among the priesthood of Hextor. He keeps to his own gloomy home, packed with undead servants he douses in sickly-sweet perfume, all the better to disguise the scent of rotting flesh. With his *amulet of the planes*, Verminek is an inveterate traveler to the Nine Hells, and he definitely has friends in low places. Since he was able to raise a retinue of barbazus to strengthen Grenell's army during the wars, he is allowed to get on with his work, though Grenell is not exactly happy with his independence.

Verminek is something of a sage, with proficiencies in the military history of northern Aerdy and also in the sociology of the Nine Hells. In a great leather-bound book hidden with *dust of disappearance* and well-guarded, Verminek even has the true names of several baatezu recorded and some details of baatezu-crafted magical artifacts. This information would be of great value to other sages, and also to anyone wishing to find and collect or destroy the listed artifacts.

## City Areas

### 14. The Haunts

Part of a residential area is occupied by mages, scholars, and priests for the most part. No few houses here are available for rent at low prices. The reason is simple—ghosts and spectres have been seen flitting around at night. And while they have not yet attacked anyone, few living souls wish to live here. The undead have proved difficult to turn or command (treat a priest as 6 levels lower than usual for such attempts). The superstitious say that the ghosts are those of ancient Ur-Flannae mystics seeking a long-lost artifact, but no one is certain. The Phantom's Lament, a tavern built by the dividing city wall just west of Newgate, offers such beverages as "wraithbeer" and "wight stuff" to its customers, who largely include mercenaries and middling officers of the town guard.





# North Province



## 15-17. Wealthy Residences

These areas are mostly occupied by: #15, priests, mages, sages, and senior military men; #16, artisans and craftsmen with their apprentices; #17, minor nobility, important civil functionaries, lawyers, scribes, and senior guildsmasters and guildsmen.

## 18-19. Merchant Quarter

Area #18 contains the better markets of Eastfair and the homes of many ordinary merchants. Area #19 is home to an enclave of merchants who specialize in exotic goods: silks, spices, peppers, rare herbs, alchemical goods, tropical hardwood furnishings, Bakluni carpets, and all manner of unusual items. Their shops are poorly stocked, and they often gather at The Spice of Life, a noisy tavern run by a Bisselite-Ketite exile.

## 20. The Streets of Delight

This notorious district offers every self-indulgence one might care to contemplate. The town guard patrols here frequently so there is little in the way of street crimes such as robbery and mugging, but most nobles bring a bodyguard or two with them when visiting. Gambling houses, drinking dens, bordellos, gladiatorial emporiums, and much worse are packed together tightly here, the streets alive with the sounds of shouting and laughter and the scents of perfume, heady drink, and dubious substances. A current craze among nobles is employing various snake venoms as a drug; a sub-lethal dose induces hallucinations, palpitations, and near-paralysis, and of course this absurdly dangerous habit has claimed no few lives of late.

There are tales of vampire-seductresses in secret establishments, and the names of many places are a warning in themselves—the Grellpit, the Dismembered Dryad, and Flayed Parade being some of the least objectionable. However, such places may be the most likely bet for encountering or overhearing nobles, priests, and other important folk revealing indiscretions and important information.

## 21-22. Old City

The houses here are those of laborers, serfs (including church serfs), and unskilled workers. Area #22 is as close as Eastfair comes to having slums; the houses here are dilapidated, and people live in very overcrowded homes, with a fair amount of violence and drunkenness. However, this is the best place for anyone wishing to lie low in Eastfair. Racketeer landlords will rent a bare room for a copper or two a day per person, and the town guard patrols the streets rarely unless there has been a recent bout of worse-than-usual street fighting.

## 23. Orc Quarter

Part of the reason for the overcrowding in the rest of Old City is this district, which is in the process of being

walled off from the rest of the town. The 3,000 troops of the Euroz Angry Army have had barracks hastily constructed here. At the present, the town guard tries only to patrol the outskirts of this zone, but the orcs have taken to kidnapping ordinary people in Old City and taking them back to their barracks for supper (as it were) or just to torture and kill them out of boredom. The orcs also act as jailers in the city prison directly opposite Spider's Gate, which allows them some opportunity for indulging their sadism and brutishness.

The orc warlord, Snaggrip Grekk, swaggers about Eastfair as if he owned the place, and there are many humans in Eastfair who would like to have the general population rise up and slaughter him and his men—no matter how many casualties might be suffered. The situation is very tense, and Grenell knows that while the orc leaders want to be in Eastfair to have a very definite presence in Grenell's capital city, their soldiers grow rebellious and irritable, needing the fresh stimulus of battle. Grenell's problem is deciding where to send them, and constructing a good cover story for it.

## Undercity

Eastfair has no undercity of note. There is no need for sewers; latrines and privies either have small shafts cut down to the water tables, or else waste is collected in pails and buckets and dumped down a small number of communal-use sinkholes leading to the aquifers. Visitors are advised not to mistake such dumping-chutes for wells.

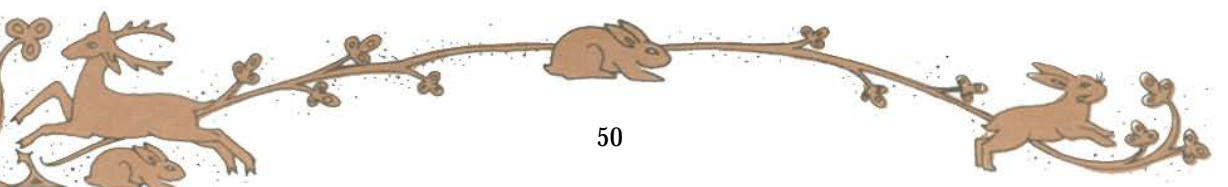
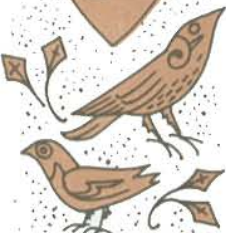
## Other Locations and Settlements

### Arrowstrand

This village of 650 folk, together with a walled pair of fortified mansion houses and a small tower, is located at the site of a major battle against the Flan tribes in 11 CY. It is the heart of a large tract of lands south of the upper Trask held by the church of Hextor, which maintains its own force of 200 militia here. In addition, there are small garrisons at other villages in the vicinity. Arrowstrand is a recruiting center for church armies. The shrine of Hextor within the tower is one of exceptional iniquity, since those who fail their military training for the church army (half of those "recruited") are sacrificed here to Hextor. The people of the nearby lands are evil indeed, and few small river craft travel the river west past Bortrend, fearing raids and murder. Grenell can count on the support of Arrowstrand and the local lands, though the land is poor and little of value is produced here.

### Atirr

A walled city of 19,000 people, Atirr is now a major power base in North Province. Built some 35 miles from



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the coast along the lengthy Trask estuary, Atirr has a well-disciplined army, a growing naval strength, and is a key trade city.

Atirr and the lands around are ruled by Prince Elkerst of the House of Torquann. Elkerst distances himself from all nobles of the House of Naelax and has made it quite plain to Grenell that he will not allow his forces to be part of any pact to attack Ratik. Elkerst has received emissaries from both Ratik and the Frost and Snow Barbarians, and has concluded agreements with them. The barbarians do not raid Atirr or Elkerst's lands, nor those of minor Torquann princelings along the coast as far as the Causeway of Fiends. They also refrain from raiding Atirr shipping. In return, Elkerst supplies weapons to Marner (his own war galleys traveling there) in return for wood and furs. Atirr vessels also trade with the Sea Barons, although not as often as they once did. The southern *dirawaen* road is not used for trade to Rinloru, given the evil triumphant there, though Atirr militias regularly patrol it close to the border. And there are fortified garrison houses at regular intervals along it.

Grenell dislikes Elkerst greatly, but the fish, wood, and furs which come through Atirr to Marder (the limit of navigability for all but the smallest river vessels) and on to Eastfair are vital to his supply lines. Grenell is in no position to march on Atirr; Elkerst has the support of many Torquann nobles, and Atirr could put up fierce resistance.

Atirr's people are strongly Oeridian-Flan and many have more Flan blood than Oeridian. Most are fishermen, seamen, rivermen, or members of the army or navy. Along the coast, many make a living from gathering a nutritious edible purple-brown kelp which is then dried for sale. Others search for the popular "cocklers," by scouring the stony beaches and prized sandy spots for a small edible shellfish, the cockle. They are tough folk, and refer to Atirr as "Pride of the east." Rulership here is high. The laws are harsh, with particularly severe penalties for thievery or any form of sabotage in the naval dockyards. The war galleys have slave rowers, many of whom are guilty of trivial offenses in the penal code of the city.

Procan's faith is strong here, and the small enclave of priests of Hextor does not maintain a high profile, though Elkerst knows that they report to Grenell and thus doesn't include them among his advisers. Ryshern Stefanem, a 16th-level elemental, is one of Elkerst's most trusted advisers and has some dealings with an exceptionally shy and reclusive clan of sea elves living along the ocean shelf along the eastern seaboard.

Atirr itself has strong defenses, once needed against barbarians. The walls facing along the Trask, and eastward, bear cannon-like devices capable of discharging *fireballs* and even *meteor swarms* at attackers. The use of fiery arrows and a very flammable oil derived from walrus fat are common battle tactics—very successful in

dealing with any attacking naval force. The city bowmen are rightly renowned for their accuracy, and Elkerst's magical sword is also a potent force in combat. The city architecture is spartan and functional, though the oiled thatched roofs of part of the oldest quarter are a surprising sight in a coastal city. Procan's spacious cathedral here boasts a magical weather vane which changes color to show local folk the coming weather for the next 24 hours, and the fish market halls are famed for their huge marble-topped trestle tables, up to 80' in length, where baskets of fish are sold daily to traders for despatch downriver.

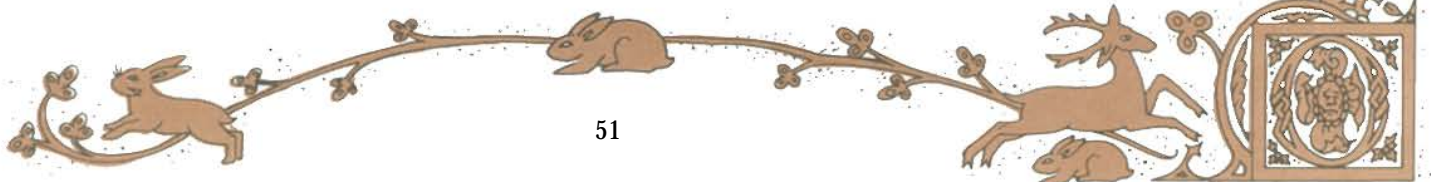
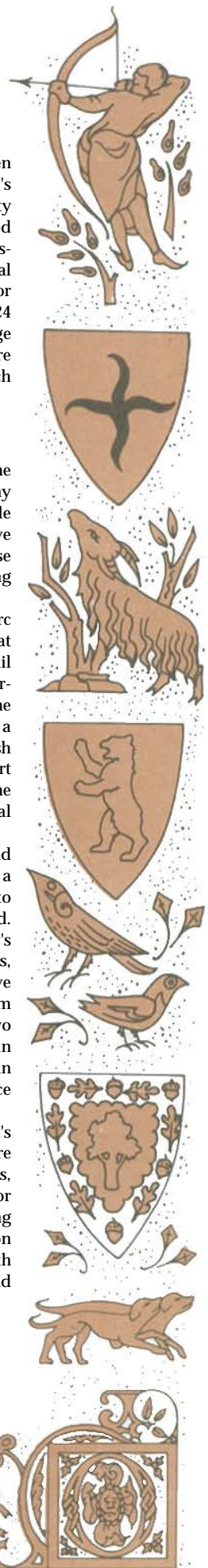
## Bellport

Bellport is a walled town on the point of explosion. The city ruler is Patriarch Halldrem, whose response to any problems here is to impose curfews, execute a few people in public, and crack down with ever more repressive dictates and laws. The 8,500 people of Bellport are close to rising up and rebelling, but they face overwhelming military strength.

In addition to 2,000 Rakersmen, Bellport has 1,200 orc troops who are officially stationed here to make sure that no banditry occurs along the northwestern Electrum Trail to Horgren's Mine and Pyre, the two mines in the uppermost Blemu Hills. They also play a role in defending the town against naval raids by the Frost Barbarians and (to a lesser extent) the Snow Barbarians, although the orcish militias are of little value in naval warfare. The Bellport navy now comprises a mere two war galleys, with the shell of a third being desperately repaired in the naval dockyard.

The town is wide open to another barbarian attack, and since the Rakersmen are needed to defend against such a possibility, Halldrem increasingly allows the orcs here to maintain day-to-day public order, acting as a town guard. Since there are probably another 2,000 orcs within a day's march of Bellport, and a few hundred hobgoblins, gnolls, and ogres with them, Halldrem can hardly afford to give the orc war leader in Bellport any offense. Indeed, from time to time Grimkun Threehand (a reference to two fingers lost from his right hand) actually seats himself in the patriarch's throne for city council meetings, and is in no hurry to get up to let Halldrem have his rightful place when he arrives.

Just as the navy is decimated here, so is Bellport's fishing fleet. This was never very sizeable, but now more than half of the fleet has been sunk by barbarian ships, and many sailors are simply too fearful to fish the Solnor Ocean. Many Bellport folk are without work and getting close to starvation. Bellport is desperately reliant on supplies from Luvern, since the lands immediately south of the city are very poor, supporting only scrub grass and some grazing sheep and the like.







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Bellport seems like a town under siege. The Rakersmen here like the orcs little more than ordinary townsfolk do, and they might even join a civil insurrection against them. Then again, the orcs might sweep down from the Blemu Hills and besiege the city. Certainly, marauding bands of orcs and other humanoids have raided the lands southwest of Bellport, and it may be that they are testing the strength of supply lines supporting Bellport before mounting an all-out attack. Since the destruction of Greenkeep, there is little to stop them crossing the upper Tessar, and an increasing number of farmsteads in these lands are deserted as folk flee to the relative safety of Stringen or the eastern towns and cities.

Bellport itself is still a city of grandeur, built into the rising Blemu Hills with great walls some 45' high facing the sea. Good, exceptionally hard gray Blemu stone was used to construct it, and the town is known as "Gray Steel" by many. The town is strong enough to withstand a very long siege, and the barbarians could not truly hope to take it. But the orcs, with so many of their number on the inside, would find matters much easier.

Still, Bellport is not without other defenses. The city's most formidable protectors are a pair of blue Corusk war dragons, *charmed* and trained by mages and warriors, who proudly bear their plate-clad expert riders into the skies above the city. Yet even they betray Bellport's tenuous situation; two other such dragons were lost in the war against Nyrond, and a surprise Frost barbarian warship raid in early Fireseek brought down another in a hail of arrows and a *flame strike* from a warrior-skald.

### Bellport Mines: Horgren's Mine, Pyre

About 600 miners work at each of the vital electrum mines. The miners are slaves, criminals, and captured demihumans, brutally treated by the orcs who carefully guard the mines. The orcs are given a percentage of the value of ores extracted, with payment in kind—which means weaponry. The garrisons of Imperial Highlanders here (150 at each mine) loathe this posting, and many would happily defect to join the bulk of their army to the west.

Horgren's mine is notoriously unsafe because of frequent flooding and the many sinkholes. Pit props rot swiftly here, and dozens of miners die in cave-ins each year. Pyre is so named because a strange stone formation atop the mine resembles the funeral pyre of some old barbarian tribes, and there are the usual tales of a curse being laid on the place. The highlanders have an additional reason for hating dispatch to this place. Both mines occasionally suffer monster attacks from xorn, horgar, and the like, but each highlander garrison has a small number of junior priests and mages among its number and can usually deal with such problems swiftly.

There are also several unnamed, small slate and stone

quarries in the hills northwest of Bellport. These are guarded by relatively large garrisons (400 or so orcs each). The laborers here are zombies, animated from those fallen in the wars. No living humans are allowed to enter these quarries, and as a result all manner of rumors have grown up concerning what fell evils lurk there.

### Bilebrine

Nearly 1,400 people live within the sea cave complex of Bilebrine. This town, if it can be called that, is owned by a Torquann princeling—as are most of the lands of the northeast beyond the Trask. For many years, an above-ground village was plagued by barbarian coastal raids and attacks from sea monsters, until the weary folk decided their best chance of survival was to stay within the confines of the caves, once they had been explored and mapped and made safe. The ruins of the original village still lie close to the shoreline above the caves themselves.

Bilebrine takes its name from the deepest sea caves where sea water leeches copper salts from the rocks, and additional minerals give the clouded water the color of bile. Craftily, one Torquann princeling feigned an incurable illness which was then miraculously "cured" by immersion in these waters. Gradually, Bilebrine became a health spa for North Province nobility trying to recover from the excesses of depravity at Edge Field or Eastfair, though the wars have sharply reduced the number of such folk coming to be pampered by hydrotherapy, flagellation with kelp fronds, and similar dubious treatments.

Bilebrine is a very curious place indeed. Many of its folk are almost albinos, and centuries of inbreeding has not done the population any favors. Most shun even the fee-paying visitors and simply hope the world and its wars will go away and leave them alone to eat the kelp, cave fish, lizards, and shellfish which form the bulk of their diet. They have learned peculiar new skills, such as weaving heat-treated and oiled kelp baskets and crafting spears from stalactites, so that many ordinary goods are simply unavailable here (there is little trade into Bilebrine).

The Torquann rulers of the nearby lands grudgingly give Grenell what taxes and tithes they can, and hate the barbarians who still raid their lands. Since they don't have orcs on their lands, and since the men of these lands are not those who would have to march to war again (being poor fighting men), they tend to favor Grenell's rulership somewhat by default. They believe that any change probably will be for the worse.

### Bortrend and the Trade Villages (Harrast, Marder)

Largest of these three villages, Bortrend links trade coming down the Trask on small river vessels with roads

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to Delaric, Kaport Bay, and Luvern. Marder is a farther down river trade village for those craft prepared to risk the predations of folk south of the river, while Harrast links the other villages to Kaport Bay and Luvern. The lands nearby are owned by a number of minor Naelax princelings, who have mostly thrown in their lot with Grenell. Each village has 500 to 900 people, with small detachments of Rakersmen, 40 to 50 in each village.

## The Causeway of Fiends

This unnatural geographical feature is shunned by all save the most fearlessly evil. A great pathway of granite slabs, up to 25' wide and 12' high, descends in a perfectly orderly formation down to the sea from a half-mile inland, with the causeway heading to the Isle of Cursed Souls (known to some as the Isle of Lost Souls). Extraordinarily, this causeway is never submerged by the tides, even though sea water might stand 80' or more high either side of it shortly before it rises to the shoreline of the magical Isle. The whole causeway radiates intense evil, and magic, if such is detected for.

During the fullness of Celene, fiends of many kinds stalk the causeway. Tanar'ri and baatezu rend at each other, tearing each other apart. They gleefully attack anything foolish enough to approach within a half-mile or so of the causeway. The fiends appear to be bound to that distance, however, and cannot travel farther inland. Usually, but a handful of fiends will appear at full moon. Very rarely—perhaps once every 80 years or so—countless numbers of lemures, manes, dretches, and least fiends of all kinds will appear as great legions driven on by a few greater fiends in an orgy of mindless slaughter and destruction.

Stone fragments from the causeway have, rarely, been taken and enchanted by men of great evil to craft dark magical artifacts. This is surpassingly dangerous. One tiny slip in a process which might take dozens of spells and months of time will leave the enchanter helpless in the face of a gate opening and a powerful fiend emerging, enraged, to slay him. Some of the oldest books of Flanaess Oeridian mages give riddles and allusions to the work of Ur-Flannae mystics with this ghastly substrate. But such artifacts are lost to Oerth—perhaps. In more modern times, only Delglath of Rinloru is known to have crafted any items from the stone of this atrocious place. Even masters of the dark arts such as Xaene and Karoolck would hesitate to follow his example.

Across the causeway lies the Isle of Cursed Souls, which is avoided by all sea vessels. In a radius of roughly 10 miles, it is said that the very rocks of the sea bed will rise and hole any vessel approaching more closely. Further, any lost at sea will become bound to the isle as ghosts, tormented by unknowable horrors for eternity. Sailors will jump overboard into stormy seas with a

prayer to Procan for their souls rather than enter these waters. Intelligent sea dwellers such as sea elves, selkie, or dolphins warn ships away from the area.

The isle itself appears only to have the ruins of an ancient monastery or mansion house atop its sheer cliffs, but distant scrying reveals an intensity of evil and magic beneath that site which is powerful enough to threaten insanity to the diviner studying the place. In texts which are now no more than a rumor in the night between old sages, the place is said to be the last resting place of three of the greatest of the Ur-Flannae. If this is true, the perils below it do not bear even thinking about.

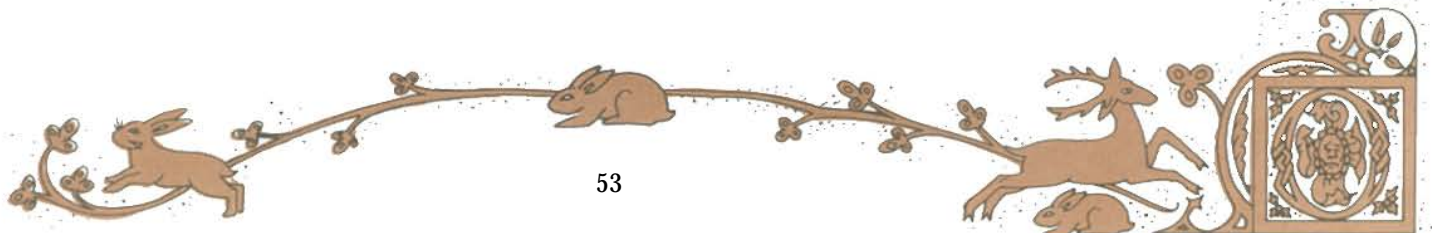
## Chokestone

This place, and the lands around it (one hex in each direction), are deserted, not farmed by anyone. The site is that of a great battle between Aerdi men and a small Flan tribe in -171 CY. The Oeridians were easily triumphant, and an excessively brutal general ordered the torture and sacrifice of all surrendering Flan folk in thanks to Erythnul. The following day, the Aerdi army woke from its camp to find that the land for several square miles around had been stripped of vegetation. Only slate-like stone remained. As they trod upon the stone, it cracked as if it were brittle paper, releasing clouds of oily, choking smoke. Less than a third of the army managed to march away from the accursed area, and those who survived suffered lung infections and disease which brought their lives to very premature ends.

From time to time since this slaughter, a huge black smoky serpentine shape has been spotted prowling the lands around Chokestone, slaying any who dare approach the land where the Flan were slaughtered. Astrologer-sages can predict this wandering; it occurs around once every 17 years, with the "snake" manifesting for 2d12 days. At other times, mages will sometimes try to obtain some of the stone for use in making *dust of sneezing and choking*, but they invariably send servants to obtain it rather than risking entry themselves.

## Darnagal

The 6,200 people of this town are ruled by Grenell himself, since he holds the lands around. An important trade town, Darnagal links Delaric and points east with Edge Field along the great *dirawaen* road. Darnagal is a rather dour place, with high rulership. And as a place to visit or pass through, it doesn't rate as highly as King's Justice (see below). However, Darnagal has a traditionally-strong Thieves' Guild with a strongly Lawful Evil bent. Thieves seeking truly expert training and the best in specialist supplies often head here. Fees are steep, and Darnagal thieves enforce their own justice against freelancers trying to practice their skills here. The infamous thief Goldwhite of Rel Deven is said to have





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been trained here, and that is a good enough commendation for most practicing light-fingered arts to tarry here.

### Edge Field

Edge Field is a large settlement, with some 16,000 people and 4,000 humanoid soldiers. The city and a long swathe of land bordering the Adri forest are owned by Prince Hastern of Naelax. Halstern is one of the few North Province nobles turned into an animus by Ivid. The overking felt relatively confident of the support of Grenell and thus concentrated on rulers elsewhere, but he made an exception for a cousin who, he believed, always had been less than fully subservient.

Hastern has the hatred of Ivid which most animuses have, and he plans to strengthen his already powerful army and ally with Grenell to march on Rauxes. His human soldiers are terrified of him. Hastern makes a point of regularly drilling and inspecting them and using his command and other powers to showy effect, to ensure their servility. Thus, they do not rebel against having to fight alongside the humanoids.

Hastern has a mix of humanoid forces. The majority are Euroz orcs from the Bone March, but he also has about 500 orcs from the Adri (who he keeps separate from the Euroz) and elite squads of forest bugbears. His ogre battalion mans the ballista and trebuchet defenses of the walled city, and armorers make chain leggings and plate breastplates for them (AC 3). Placing them in such highly visible locations does wonders for keeping the ordinary folk of the city scared. Hastern rules by fear. It's a lesson he learned quickly as a Naelax prince.

Hastern is also more wealthy than most princes. When the Bone March was overrun, many fled here from Knurl; Hastern imposed a special tax on their belongings. Also, Edge Field has traditionally been the place where Aerdy bandits fleeing towards the Adri from imperial soldiers have been taken—for the city boasts a great jail with virtually impregnable stone walls and many magical wards and barriers. Such bandits often carried fair sums in gold, or gems, with them. Hastern has avoided paying too much of this wealth to Grenell by the simple expedient of paying tithes instead. These take the form of wood, slaves, and gold from the Adri, taken in the raids his powerful soldiers mount from the city and a string of outlying militia camps, of which the orc camp Gerrkadenk is the most important.

Hastern's troops fare well on their Adri raids (see the chapter on the Adri forest). However, he has two border disputes of note. The exact southern border of his lands is challenged by both Prince Strychan of Dustbridge and Countess Ishell of Rikerstone. Since the countess is generally seen as a liegwoman of Prince Montand of Delaric—who is powerful and dangerous—these are troubling disputes. Hastern's view is that he who holds

the disputed lands is the winner in such conflicts; he does not bother with diplomacy or treaties. However, rather than allowing his own soldiers bearing his heraldry and insignia to enter the disputed lands, he allows orcs to maraud there "off duty." This means that along the central southeastern fringe of the Adri most of the fighting takes place between Aerdy factions and orcs rather than the Adri being subjected to any attacks. This is one merciful zone of respite for Adri folk, allowing them to concentrate their defenses on the more dangerous northern and western fringes of their forest.

Edge Field has high rulership level, but the lands around have medium to poor rulership. Those lands with mainly orc encampments are low, while those with human soldiers posted at small villages and settlements are medium. No few human troops outside Edge Field are drifting away to the highlander castles, seeking employment as mercenaries or in the service of Baron-General Shalaster. Hastern is renowned for his pursuit of such defectors, however, so only a trickle of men escape in this way. Hastern is also known to have many mercenaries in his service, including even renegades from the Bandit Kingdoms with knowledge of forest and woodland banditry around the Fellreev, Phostwood, and Nurtherwood.

The city itself is mainly built of Adri wood, with some Blemu stone for richer buildings. The city walls are made of that stone, with the town gates bearing huge bronze-wood shields with Hastern's heraldic emblem—a red griffin rampant on a green background. Edge Field's few resident mages conduct their research at an exceptional dweomertorium with a *glassteel* cupola used for astrological studies.

Among other striking sights in the city, Rostanna's House of Pleasure is of special note. A vaguely hemispherical building, it was built in the shape of a galda fruit by a very eccentric mage who placed many strange enchantments within. Visitors are greeted by talking doors reciting the services available, and banquets are served by constructs of unique design. For example, roasts of beef are carved up by the very platters they are placed upon! Visitors should beware the couches here, for they are capable of tickling those reclining upon them as expertly as any courtesan.

Less pleasant are the forbidding city jail and tall, narrow cathedral of Hextor that looms behind great rusted iron railings as sharp as spears. These buildings stand within a separately walled-off central city area which also houses Hastern and his personal bodyguard in a four-story keep.

A special feature is a walled-off maze garden currently being completed for Hastern. Thick, thorny hedges form the maze walls, and the maze is filled with hangman trees, kampfuls, and like terrors in addition to *distance distortions* and other confusing magics. People who

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displease Hastern are thrown into this maze. He watches their struggles with a specially-crafted *crystal ball* while he sits in a flowery bower which magically hovers above the maze. Sometimes, plant monsters escape by night and attack city folk, though now that the outer walls are almost fully enchanted with barrier spells this hazard should become less onerous.

Lastly, Edge Field has many notable inhabitants. The most dangerous, perhaps, is Plandarn Reshelfer, a preceptor of Midnight Darkness. His profile below details his interests and concerns; beware this man!

## Greenkeep

This ruin marks the easternmost point of the highlander castles. In Suns' Ebb CY 584, the castle was decimated by an immensely powerful magical strike. A boiling black cloud settled in the sky above Greenkeep, and vast strokes of lightning and acid rain cascaded down on the building. The walls and towers were shattered and the keep ruined, with most of the garrison here slain and only a few managing to escape westward to safety.

It is still unknown who mounted this formidable attack. The most often-rumored theory connects the attack with the necromancer Raspalan, garrisoned with the troops here. Raspalan was a minor princeling of the House of Garasteth, and was known to have fled his birthplace west of Rinloru and no few other eastern and southern cities during his lifetime. He left behind a trail of murder, outrage, and bitter enemies. The destruction of Greenkeep is generally believed to be due to one of those enemies catching up with him.

The ruin takes its name from a radiant green glow which still emanates from the keep on exceptionally cold nights. The few who have ventured anywhere near the place mumble about moving stones, the keep swelling and contracting before their eyes, and blood-freezing screams that seem to come from far beneath the ground. But this is probably just a hallucination. Nonetheless, survivors are rumored to speak with horror of Raspalan's experiments in the keep dungeon and to tell tales of wretches and the strange supplies which were ferried down to those dungeons to enable the grisly wizard to continue his malign research.

## The Highlander Castles

This set of five castles (originally six), with an additional tower populated by combat mages who could *teleport without error* to and from any castle in the line from here, was originally constructed to form a highly defensible fall-back line south of the Tessar. The value of these castles was amply demonstrated following the fall of Knurl and the western lands to the humanoids; their attempts to besiege these castles came to naught.

The military force within these castles was originally

known as the Imperial Highlanders, since many were well-trained hillsmen used to skirmishes in the Blemu Hills and Rakers. They are tough, strong, exceptionally disciplined men with very high morale. They still call themselves Imperial Highlanders, but now they obey the dictates of no ruler other than the one they have chosen. They have, in effect, seceded from North Province. Their war leaders swore an oath of allegiance to Baron-General Shalaster, who commands them from his base at the southernmost castle.

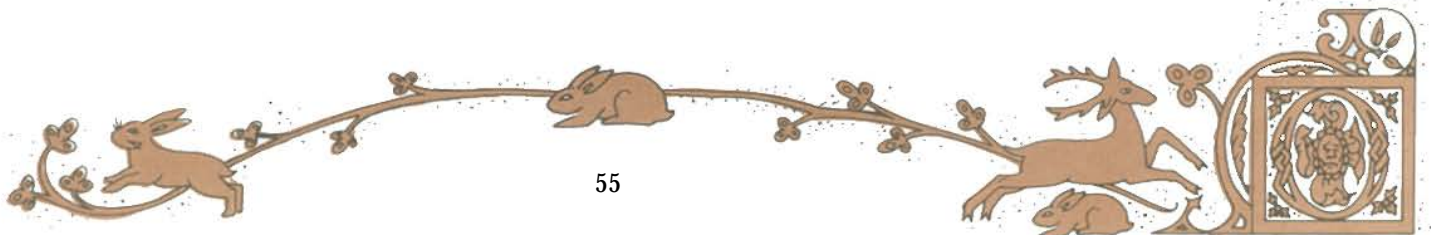
Shalaster is a rarity; a powerful warrior of the House of Garasteth. Mocked for being over-large and unsuited to the arcane pursuits favored by that house, the princeling grew into an exceptionally strong youth and exchanged his landholdings south of Rinloru for those of a Torquann noble east of Knurl and across the Tessar. Now, Shalaster effectively controls all the lands in a strip 50 or so miles east from the castles.

Shalaster gained the backing of the Imperial Highlanders for several reasons. First, he is a war hero who has fought alongside them. Second, the highlanders are stubborn, proud men who don't like being led by priests. Third, Shalaster has made it clear that he does not actively oppose Grenell. He is not attempting to subvert the Herzog, and he pays taxes and tithes at the same rates as he did post-war. Thus, the highlanders don't believe they have mutinied. Finally, and this is the most important factor, Shalaster hates humanoids with a boiling, steel-hard, utterly uncompromising loathing. So do the highlanders. Forced to fight with orcs under the command of priests during the war against Nyronnd, the highlander leaders despised every second of it, and they are delighted in their new leader.

Shalaster and the highlanders patrol the full length of the roads along the castles, although there is a long gap eastward to Greenkeep and beyond and orcs are beginning to cross in that region. Elsewhere, Shalaster has been very successful in keeping the orcs to the west back of the Tessar. This has gained him the support of local farming folk and local landholders as far as Stringen.

Indeed, the highlanders even raid into the Blemu Hills across the river, aided by magical scrying from a fine, very bright young diviner in Shalaster's retinue and the trained wyverns which Shalaster and three of the highlander senior officers ride. Raids into the old Ripper Mines have yielded up some lost ores, a few magical items, and even a remnant of 45 dwarves who had been holed up, besieged by orcs and ogres, for about a dozen years. The dwarves eagerly joined Shalaster's forces, and provide him with expert knowledge of the western hills.

One of Shalaster's mages is known to have visited the rulers of Atirr, Kaport Bay, and possibly others in North Province for negotiations. These rulers, who do not favor Grenell's dealings with the Bone March, are too dispersed to provide much in the way of mutual help, but a new





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alliance may be germinating.

Nonetheless, for all that he may be a war hero and a warder-off of orcs, Shalaster is hardly a pleasant individual. He is powerfully Lawful Evil—as any of the serfs on his lands could inform any visitor. Shalaster is cruel, flint-hearted, and viciously opposed to all good-aligned priest-hoods and individuals. If anything, he would make a crueller and more wicked ruler of North Province than Grenell.

## Iwish

Pronounced "eye-wish," this village of 450 is named after the old lament "I wish..." once heard so often among the gold-fevered river panners who came late to the Nugget Run of the upper Flanmi in the second and third centuries. For a time, sizeable gold nuggets could be found by panning the fine stone and silt of the bed. However, now finds consist of a few flakes of no more than 1d6 gp value for a week's worth of panning.

Iwish is now rundown, and is a tenth of the size of 300 years past. Still, it is a center for a number of small hamlets and very minor landholdings of petty Naelax who congregate at Iwish's main hostelry, The Golden Grumnet. The Grumnet (named after an archaic unit of weight), is the perfect spot to plan some petty conspiracy or other.

Along the Nugget Run, the riverbank is still often in very poor repair due to centuries of being trodden down and trampled by gold-grabbing panners and wagons, and flooding is common in the surrounding lands during spring. It area is also dangerous, since disgruntled panners decide to fill their pockets from time to time with the gold of passersby. In addition, there are crossbow-armed hunters out after the herons, swans, and northern cranes which nest or rest here at various times of year.

## Kaport Bay

Kaport Bay is the most rugged of North Province's towns, a whaling station and fishing town of 5,200 souls. Together with its twin satellite villages of Low and High Scarport, this town has a characteristic atmosphere. The people here are hardy men and women with little time for frivolity—or outsiders. They term themselves "Kaportlanders" and are proud of this. Flan blood is strong, and the Kaportlanders are no friends of Grenell and his court.

Kaport Bay maintains three stout war galleys used to protect its whaling fleet, not least against the attacks of deep sea kraken in the Solnor Ocean. Barbarians rarely raided here in the past, given their blood ties with the fair-haired Kaportlanders, and they do not do so now. Kaport Bay remains a place unto itself, allying formally with no one. It is a town where a man's word is his bond (unlike the barbarians, few folk here are chaotic). Thieves are strung up on gibbets more or less on sight. Demihu-

mans are absent from the town, and are regarded with curiosity and suspicion (as are all outsiders).

Kaport Bay's ruler, Prince Anxann, is the nominal head of the Torquann House in this area, with many cousins and siblings ruling the coastal lands around Kaport Bay. Ivid did not trust Anxann to give the Sea Barons proper support during the wars and had him made into an animus. Now, Anxann plans the overthrow of Ivid, but he has one obsession which confines him to his gloomy cliff-top keep with his personal bodyguard of knights. Anxann is convinced that astrology is the only way to predict when, and how, Ivid can be overthrown. He has become very reliant on a complete charlatan, Zwingell, who makes all manner of predictions pertaining to "The Dancer of Swords in the Heavens," "The Singing Sisters of Revenge in the constellation of the Druid," and the like. Zwingell lives in luxury and continues to milk this for all its worth; by sheer luck, he predicted one major storm in Readyng and by confining the whaling vessels to port Anxann probably saved at least two or three large ships. Thus, none can question Zwingell's skills—at least for the time being.

Thus, Kaport Bay is much the way it was before the wars, since Anxann broods within his keep and rarely emerges from it. The stone town is gray, and hardly possesses much excitement for those used to city life, but it does have one singular and striking feature.

A century or so ago, a skilled enchanter worked with a dwarven architect to construct a set of sluices and wheels which channelled sea water at high tide into a complex apparatus which desalinated the water (providing drinking water and salt for export) and also raised the water through a permanent *reverse gravity* effect. Tumbling through a huge set of water wheels, the water now provides the motive force for an automated whale-flensing apparatus. Sea captains simply insert a whale at one end (more or less) and the whale emerges separated into its useful components (meat and blubber, blood and oil, bone, etc.) at the other. Other coastal towns have attempted to duplicate this strange machine; the ruins of a few of the less spectacularly unsuccessful attempts can be seen at the Scarport villages.

## King's Justice

Originally built as a fortified tavern for session judges (hence the name), this rapidly grew into a large fortified mansion house, then a hamlet, then a village and keep, and now 2,200 people live here. For some 70 years there has been a Windmarch trade fair here during the third week of Harvester, shared with the town of Darnagal.

King's Justice stands close by a three-way border, between Delaric, Dustbridge, and Eastfair. As a result, no few mercenaries pass through, and many local rulers send emissaries to recruit here. The land was bought by

# North Province

merchants centuries ago, and King's Justice is virtually a free borough, with the present landholder being an aged and half-enfeebled man with a weak militia (rulership is low). Riotous behavior, brawling, and revelry are no strangers to this increasingly cosmopolitan place. And there are many men hiding from the wrath of deserted rulers and commanding officers lurking among the beggars and cutpurses in the western slums of the village.

## Luvern

Luvern is a strategically vital town of 2,800 folk linking several trade routes, lying at the lowland headwaters of the Trask where underground water tables and springs rise to form the gentle, sluggish waters of the river. Owned by Prince Tharndon of Torquann, the town is an unhappy place. The Prince has decided to extract all he can by way of tax and tithe and flee North Province, to a land of safety such as one of the Urnst states or even Greyhawk City. As a result, goods are very expensive here (Cost Multiplier 170%) though there are few shortages.

Trade to and from Eastfair and Kaport Bay must still pass through (farther west than Luvern is too dangerous because of raiding orcs) and, likewise, trade from Atirr to Eastfair will not readily detour south because of the rapacious folk around Arrowstrand. Tharndon's militia quell civil unrest brutally, and they need to; many folk here are close to starvation in the midst of plenty, given the trade which passes through.

There may yet be hope. The Knights of Sun and Moon, with their leader Sir Berrensen Astraden, have begun to collect together in Luvern from the remnants of this group in the rest of North Province. Berrensen's profile below gives further details, but this group hopes to expose the corruption of the town and to go to Grenell and have the lands confiscated from Tharndon. Since Berrensen has a claim on the lands, they hope to take the town over and change things for the better. Whether they will be successful is uncertain; Plandarn Reshelfer of Edge Field knows of their intentions and it is surely but a matter of time before he attempts to strike them down.

## Stringen

This town of 4,500 folk and the lands around it make up the fief of Prince Rishern of Naelax. He is, in turn, a liegeman of Prince Hastern of Edge Field and allies firmly with him. Soldiers and orcs from here raid the northeastern Adri, but also keep a watch on the highlander castles. Rinshern is said to have a detachment of a dozen barbazus among his elite troops, but perhaps only his sinister yellow-robed mage, Zebbenen, knows the truth of this. Some whisper that Zebbenen is in Hastern's service and magically controls Rinshern. After all, he only appeared in Stringen two years ago.

Detachments of soldiers accompany Zebbenen on well-prepared forays into the Adri. They are surely seeking something the mage prizes highly, but none ever seem able to remember any details of what transpired in the forest when they return. Indeed, many serfs and artisans complain of episodes of amnesia, blackouts, and like ills, with no one able to account for these adversities.

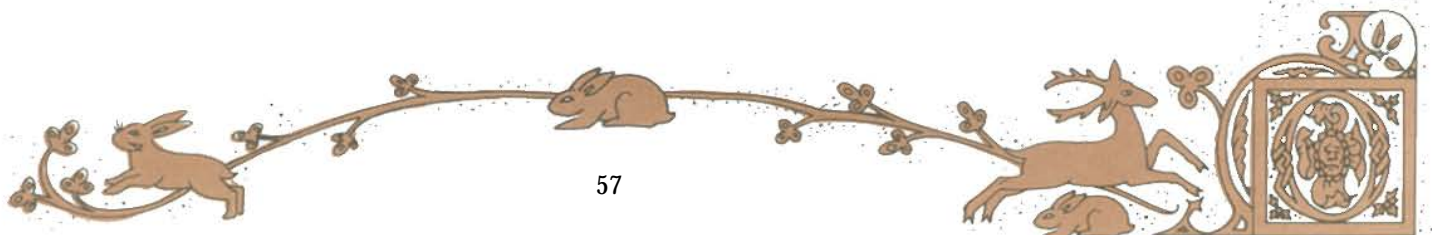
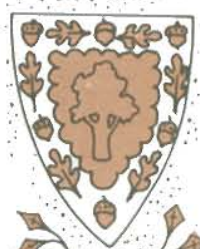
## Personalities of North Province

**Anxann, Prince of the House of Torquann:** Animus with abilities of 9th-level fighter (Str 18/76, Dex 15, Con 18). AC 0 (*plate mail* +2, shield not used), hp 78, AL LE. Seclusive and obsessional, Anxann has no political dealings with other rulers. Anxann is 40 years old, but looks around 60, with wrinkled and weathered skin; he has very fine white hair and brown-hazel eyes and looks shorter than his 5' 10" true height, since he tends to shuffle and stoop when walking. Anxann has taken to wearing robes decorated with astrological symbols. He owns a *two-handed sword* +3 and a *ring of shooting stars* and is believed to have a *rod of rulership*, a family heirloom.

**(Sir) Berrensen Astraden:** 7th-level fighter (Str 17, Dex 17, Wis 16, Cha 17). AC -2/-5 (*chain mail* +2, *shield* +1, +4 *versus missiles*), hp 50, AL LN (LG). Berrensen is just 25 years old, 6' tall, with light auburn hair and hazel eyes. Berrensen is acknowledged leader of the Knights of Sun and Moon, not least on account of his high Charisma. In Luvern, he and five other of his order work at humble and menial tasks, often as merchant laborers. They avoid any actions which might reveal their true allegiances or identities; they have fled from other Aerdy towns and cities to escape the anti-Pholtus pogroms which so many rulers mounted.

Berrensen is less inflexible than so many of his following. With his group, his initial aim is simply to free Luvern from its cruel ruler and strengthen the town. They know that Luvern is strategically important, and if they could control it, they would rapidly acquire funds from tithes on the trade there. Berrensen has a distant claim to land ownership himself, through marriage into the House of Torquann (his wife died some three years past). Berrensen has begun to make contact with Parren Ludern of the Adri forest and the rangers of the Lone Heath, and he believes he could use that money to supply them with weapons and mercenaries. If the worse came to pass, the knights could flee to one or other of those places (though the chaotic rangers of the Lone Heath might not appreciate them).

This group is rather naive, truth be told. They are all young (16-25 years) and of low levels (2-6, other than Berrensen). However, they are not without resources. First, Berrensen has a *ring of human influence* which he





## North Province

doesn't like to use for ethical reasons, but which gives the group obvious potential leverage. Second, Berrensen was given a list of important relics and artifacts of Pholtus which were hidden around the lands, and he and his group are looking for trustworthy allies they might work with to recover these.

**Elkerst, Prince of the House of Torquann:** 12th-level fighter (Str 18/11, Con 17, Wis 15). AC -1 or better (*plate mail +4 of etherealness*, one charge used, shield not used, also sword—see below), hp 90, AL LN. Elkerst is 37 years old, 6' 2", and powerfully built. His long brown hair has a curious white streak just behind his right ear, though his full beard has no such odd feature. His brown eyes are large, and his strong forearms bristle with thick hair.

Elkerst is renowned for his *singing defender longsword +4*, which twice a day can emit a wave of sound in a 120-degree arc to a range of 120'. All hostile creatures within the area of effect must make a saving throw versus spells or else be affected as by a *symbol of persuasion*. Elkerst also owns a *trident of fish command* and a *ring of regeneration*.

Elkerst is a hard ruler, but fair, and Atirr has prospered under his leadership. Some speak of him as the next ruler of North Province, though he has no such ambition. He would be content with Grenell, if only the Herzog would sweep the orcs from the land. Elkerst had hoped to marry Anxann's sister, Siskinama, to unite Kaport Bay and Atirr and create a powerful eastern land. He was fostered by Anxann's father, and thus is fond of him—or, rather, fond of what Anxann was. Thus, he hates the overking deeply, and an alliance with other factions seeking to attack Ivid might appeal to him. However, he has his worries about the Twin Cities, and is in no hurry to expend Atirr's strength in needless conflict.

**Grenell (His Radiant Grace), Herzog of the North:** 18th-level priest of Hextor (Str 15, Con 16, Wis 18). AC 1 (*scale mail +5*, *cloak of protection +3*, shield not used), hp 88, AL LE. Grenell has been a survivor all his 62 years. His severely-cropped iron-gray hair, hooked nose, strong chin and jawline, and piercing blue eyes make him look more like a bruiser than a priest. The grizzled old man is wise and crafty. He is a good warrior, too, with his *bracers of archery* and *longbow +3* making him a fair shot. His *scimitar +4* has the additional properties of automatically detecting good alignment within 60' (the scimitar wails and glows red) and casting *repulsion* three times a week. He always wears his *helm of comprehending languages and reading magic*.

Grenell is an odious man, overbearing and callous, treating most of his retinue as if they were congenital idiots. He believes keenly that his temporal authority is beginning to slip away, even though his dissenting nobles such as Elkerst and Shalaster still pay taxes and tithes to

him. Though Lawful, Grenell will use almost any resource—humanoids, poisons, assassins, or worse—to unify his kingdom. By carefully making sure that any really bright priest rising through the ranks of his church meets with an unfortunate accident, Grenell has ensured his unquestioned preeminence, and there is no obvious successor. He has no goal of ruling Aerdy, believing that the Great Kingdom is sundered for ever, but the evil-hearted old man with the grip of iron has evaded Ivid's clutches and plans to rule in North Province for years to come.

**(Patriarch) Halldrem:** 14th-level priest of Hextor (Con 16, Wis 16, Cha 5). AC 3 (*chain mail +2*, shield not used), hp 81, AL LE (NE). Halldrem is 5' 6", brown-haired and gray-eyed, 43 years of age; and he is malodorous, ugly, and fat. He is greedy for magical items and owns many, including the *ring of free action* and *ring of mind shielding* he always wears, and no few magical wands. He is known to have *wands of enemy detection*, *fear*, and *magic missiles* among others. He is also believed to have a *libram of ineffable damnation* and seeks to trade this for a suitably powerful magical item he can use.

Halldrem is a born bully-coward. Grenell chose him to administer Bellport because Halldrem is scared witless of the Herzog and can be trusted to do exactly what he is told. He tends to solve problems by hiding in his vestry and hoping they will go away, but he is also wantonly cruel to his subordinates. His retinue of junior priests are noteworthy for their extreme ugliness (which makes Halldrem seem less ugly, something he is very sensitive about since the ghastly priest actually fancies himself as a born rake and ladies' man). On the positive side, Halldrem does have a good tactical sense in battle and an intuitive sense of what enemy armies may be planning which borders on the precognitive.

**Hastern, Prince of the House of Naelax:** Animus with abilities of 12th-level thief (Dex 18, Int 17). AC -5 (*bracers of defense* AC 4, *ring of protection +5*), hp 71, AL CE. Hastern stands only 5' 6" tall, but he looks slightly younger than his 35 years, since revivification did not alter his appearance as greatly as it did most animus nobles. He owns a *short sword of speed +3* (allowing him two attacks per round) in addition to numerous magical items prized by thieves (use items from the *Complete Thief's Handbook* as desired).

Hastern is a true Naelax Prince. That is to say, he acquired his lands by marrying the only daughter of the previous landowner. Tragically, one evening when Hastern was conveniently far away, his wife and father-in-law, together with everyone else who might have had a claim to the land, died in a great outbreak of food poisoning. Hastern swiftly took over, with a forged set of imperial documents, and has remained in control since.

# North Province

Hastern stayed in control at first because he increased taxes, paid the neglected soldiers at Edge Field half as much again as they had been paid before, and used the treasure maps he had obtained during his thieving years to locate lost wealth in the Blemu Hills. This gave him acquaintance with orcs as evil as himself, who now serve happily in his army since they get to do all the pillaging and marauding they want within the Adri. Hastern has recruited more such from the Adri itself.

Hastern was magically forced to attend Ivid in Rauxes, and the overking—not trusting Hastern at all—made him the first North Province target for revivification. Hastern hates Ivid with a ferocity which is almost unequalled even among animus rulers. Now, his old pleasures of wine, women, song, and abusing the weak and helpless are of no value to him; his senses are dulled, his appetites unquenched by such things. Hastern is chaotic and, as such, given to occasional outbreaks of random and terrifying violence. He has learned the wisdom of maintaining a captive dungeon of helpless slaves beneath his mansion rather than taking out such rages on his troops and advisers. And Hastern is unusually dangerous even for an animus since his old, brilliant intellect is still intact.

**Morrkend:** 18th-level specialist enchanter (Int 18, Cha 16). AC 0 (*bracers of defense* AC 4, *ring of protection* +4), hp 39, AL N. Morrkend is 71 years old, 5' 5", almost wholly bald, with watery gray eyes. This NPC is left for the DM to develop so far as his magical items, grimoires, and other precious possessions are concerned. Particularly if the DM wishes to use him as a patron for PCs, or as a trader in magical goods, his magical possessions will need devising to suit the needs of the campaign. However, the old man certainly has an *amulet of proof against detection and location* and a *ring of free action* to ward off crude attempts at mental scrying and control.

**Plandarn Relshefer:** 10th-level bard (Dex 17, Int 16, Cha 16). AC 1 (*leather armor* +4, shield not used), hp 45, AL NE. Plandarn is 6' 1", 34 years old, very fair-haired, with blue eyes and a fetching smile. In Edge Field, he poses as a fop and dandy, a successful merchant who has retired from the east coastal provinces but keeps his hand in by brokering some deals on Adri produce. He feigns being less smart than he is, and he doesn't make himself too conspicuous.

Plandarn has several magical items which help with his work as a lone assassin for Midnight Darkness: *boots of varied tracks*, a *cloak of the bat*, and *wings of flying*. He uses spells such as *improved invisibility* and appearance-altering spells (*alter self*, *change self*, etc.) to further conceal his tracking and effect getaways. He knows how to apply venoms to the bolts from his *short bow* +4 as well as to his pair of *short swords* +2. Plandarn lives alone, and just as he receives orders from a Hidden Sickle he does not

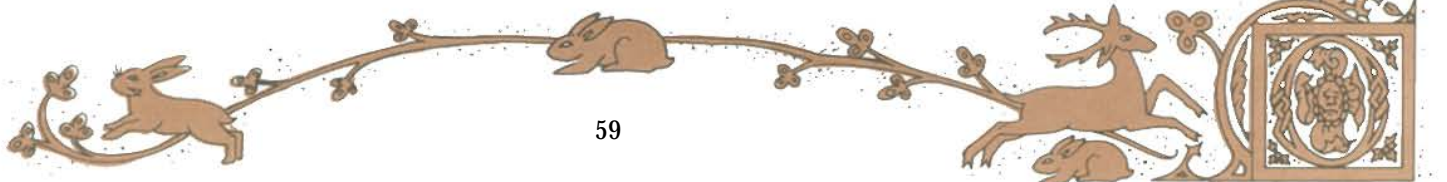
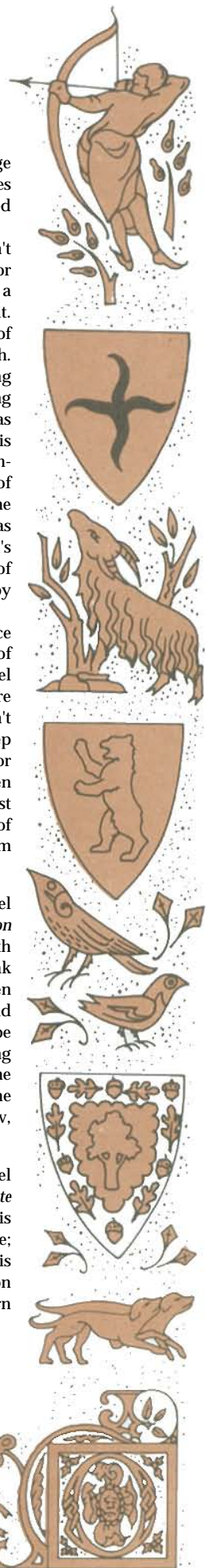
know, so he has a half-dozen underlings (four in Edge Field, one each in Bellport and Eastfair) he communicates through a series of messages in coded form concealed within goods he ships as a merchant.

Plandarn enjoys planning assassinations, but doesn't get all that much pleasure from carrying them out. For him, the real pleasure is stalking his quarry, seeing a meticulous scheme work just as he'd planned it. Currently, he has just become aware of the Knights of Sun and Moon in Luvern and is devising their dispatch. He wants to make that a colorful serial killing, getting into a position from which he can observe the surviving knights becoming increasingly desperate and terrified as another of them is found with a poisoned dagger in his back. However, Plandarn will happily kill any worthwhile good-aligned target. Though not a worshiper of Nerull, he believes that he sees Nerull's hand behind the evil changes in Aerdy and with a local ruler as vicious as Hastern, who is to say otherwise? Hence, gaining Nerull's favor is a desirable bonus on top of the sheer delight of planning good, efficient murders. Plandarn is a happy man.

Plandarn is enjoying his new-found independence without Hidden Sickle orders. He knows the identities of two other preceptors, Erkann of Zelradton and Marshevel of Rel Astra, but he doesn't know that Marshevel is aware of his identity. Unlike the other preceptors, he doesn't keep notes of what he knows (though he tries to keep souvenirs of those he has slain—a garment, knife, ring, or an ear). However, Plandarn's bardic training has given him a collection of notes and maps pertaining to lost legends, magical items and the like which would be of value if anyone could enter his home and steal them from his heavily-trapped basement.

**Rinshern, Prince of the House of Naelax:** 4th-level thief (Dex 17). AC 1 (*leather armor* +2, *cloak of protection* +2). Rinshern is 30 years of age, 5' 11", slim of build, with long and rather effeminate wavy brown hair and weak brown eyes. Rinshern and his predecessors have been liegemen to the rulers of Edge Field for generations, and have been as feeble and cowardly a family line as can be imagined. Rinshern was about to desert his fief, taking his treasury with him, when Halstern dispatched the mage Zebbenen to make sure Rinshern did nothing of the sort. The thief is wholly controlled by that mage now, and has no independent volition.

**Sasquand, Marshal of North Province:** 17th-level fighter (Str 18/41, Dex 16, Con 17, Cha 16). AC -4 (*plate mail* +5, shield not used), hp 121, AL LE. Sasquand is technically commander of all armies of North Province; he looks the part at 6' 9" and 297 lbs., with little fat on his frame. His age, 46, is beginning to show in the lines on his face, but not too much; he has a full head of auburn





# North Province



hair and his green eyes are still alive, alert, and watchful. Sasquand officially supports Grenell, but he finds it harder to choke back his contempt for orcs and the way they behave in Bellport and elsewhere. He is happy to command them as front-line troops in war, where they are expendable; he detests them in peacetime. As yet, Sasquand would not even consider acting against the Herzog because he believes this would plunge North Province into anarchy, but events at the highlander castles and in Atirr do not go unnoticed and Sasquand wonders, over his favored galda-fruit brandy nightcap, whether a new and better leader might be emerging for the day when Grenell grows old. Indeed, might not that leader be himself?

**(Baron-General) Shalaster:** 15th-level fighter (Str 18/99, Con 18, Int 15, Cha 15). AC 1/-1 (*plate mail* +2, *boots of speed*, shield not used), hp 121, AL LE. Shalaster stands 6' 5", and at 39 he is still in his prime. His thick black hair is untouched by gray, and his brown eyes grip a viewer with an intimidating gaze. Shalaster's plate mail allows him to create an *aura of persuasion* once a day for 3 turns (+1d4 Charisma). He hefts a *two-handed sword* +2, +3 vs. orcs, goblins, and hobgoblins, +4 vs. trolls and giants. Shalaster looks majestic on his war wyvern, but in battle he has been seen to dismount and race to the fray with his magical boots.

Shalaster has his army and is content. He's a military man through and through, and doesn't use his title of prince. He feels the nobility rank alienates his men. Shalaster maintains harsh discipline, but the morale of his troops is maintained not least because of Shalaster's providing the highlanders with magical items of real value; the regiment has *drums of panic* and a *horn of blasting* commissioned by Shalaster from Morrkend of Eastfair. There are a few priests of Hextor among their number, but they are not allowed any role other than providing battle magic.

Shalaster is known to detest the cowardly ruler of Stingen and his lord, the ruler of Eastfair, but he also has the sense not to challenge an animus (especially one with a considerable army). Hence he bides his time, fending off the orcs around his castles. He grows richer from forays into the Blemu Hills, and plans to strengthen his forces with mercenaries and more magical items bought from Morrkend. He makes a good patron in any adventure involving the retrieval of magical items directly useful to a general and his army (*rod of rulership*, powerful magical weapons, morale-boosting magical battle standards or banners, etc.); while evil, he is very Lawful, and always a man of his word. Finally, he has little time for other Garasteth nobles and has a fierce contempt for Lakaster of Winetha.

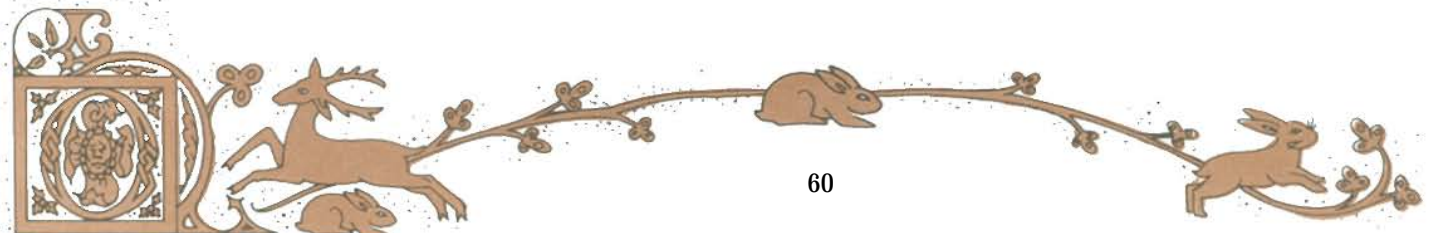
**Sheleern Valander:** 9th-level thief (Dex 18, Con 16, Int

16, Cha 17). AC 1 (*leather armor* +3), hp 50, AL N (NE). Sheleern is 28 years old, with straight blond hair cut to the base of her neck, blue eyes, and a figure men have duelled as well as drooled over. A petite 5' 2", she plays the role of the slightly dumb blond good-time girl to the full, but most around Eastfair know her better. It's mostly adopted these days to dupe outsiders. Sheleern might rob them, cut their throats, and loot their tavern room, or just enjoy the company of a charismatic male for a night on the town (so long as he does all the paying).

Sheleern is actually rather bored with city life. Eastfair she knows too well, and it knows her too well; she can't use her *ring of telekinesis* at the gaming house tables now, everyone knows about it. The nobles she used to blackmail have grown too jaded and evil to care about exposure any longer, so that source of revenue is drying up. Sheleern looks for adventure, and makes a good companion; she does not, as a matter of principle and pragmatics, rob, betray, or backstab fellow adventurers. A group with the good, smart wizard she would expect among their number (preferably one who can protect her with *invisibility*, etc.) would find her a useful addition. She will bring her prized *short sword* +4 and *dagger of venom* along with her, together with the magical thieves' tools which add +10% to her chances for opening locks and finding (mechanical) traps. Even if a group didn't wish to take her along beyond Eastfair, her knowledge of the city and its powerful people would be worth paying for.

**Tharndon, Prince of the House of Torquann:** 5th-level thief (Dex 17). AC 0 (*leather armor* +3, *cloak of protection* +2). Tharndon is 37 years old, 5' 10", with very light brown hair and brown-hazel eyes. The administrator of Luvern kow-tows to Grenell and obeys all his dictates, but he is looking to take his monies and flee to Greyhawk City, Dyvers, or some point westward beyond the Herzog's reach. He plans to do this after the coming harvest, when he has extracted a high tithe from his people. There promises to be civil disorder when Tharndon announces those high tithes, so he's keeping them a secret for the time being. Luvern could become a flash-point of anarchy once its ruler departs, if his plan is successful.

**(Patriarch) Verminek:** 12th-level priest of Hextor (Str 15, Dex 15, Con 15, Int 16, Wis 18). AC 3 or better (*cloak of protection* +3, +4 on Inner Planes, +5 on Outer Planes; *ring of protection* +3), hp 66, AL NE. Verminek is small at 5' 3", slim of build, 49 years of age, bald with beetling eyebrows, brown eyes and large jug ears. He may be unprepossessing of appearance, but he is wily, cunning and smart. He prefers the undead to living people (they're easier to control), but he has a handful of acquaintances among sages. Grenell tolerates his maverick nature



## North Province

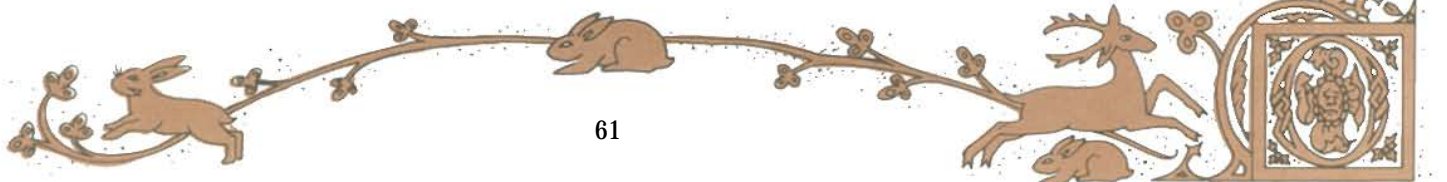
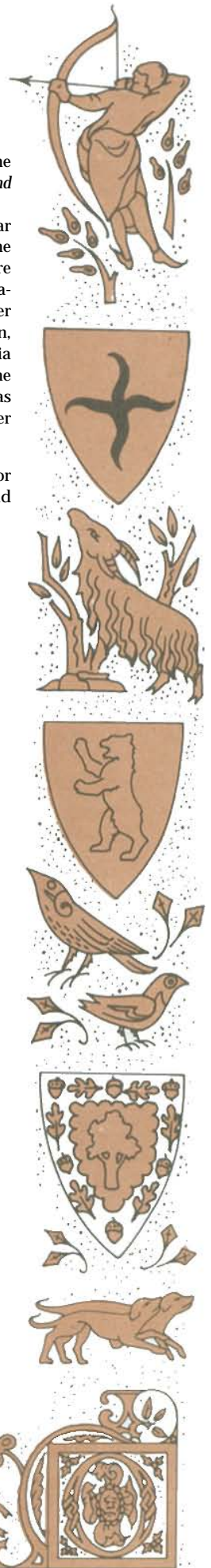
because Verminek often reports tidbits of useful information, such as baatezu dealings with Ivid. Verminek is a very evil creature, but he also has much knowledge and many extraplanar contacts and often seeks knowledge for its own sake (not an evil action). He should not be treated as just an evil NPC to be raided or killed by the PCs fighting the good fight.

**Zebbenen:** 9th-level wizard (Con 15, Int 17, Wis 16). AC 7 (*ring of protection* +3), hp 30, AL CE. Zebbenen is not what he appears. Swathed in long yellow robes and breeches, with a hood covering his face, the mage looks strangely boyish for one with his skills. That's because Zebbenen is a woman of 27 years, an ex-apprentice of Xaene. She is tall enough (5' 7") to get away with the pretense of being a male, and keeps her blond hair cut short. Zebbenen's real name is Alyshizia, and she knows well enough that if Xaene seeks to find her he will, pretense or no; the disguise is simply convenient for

throwing less determined and skillful pursuers off the scent. She has an *amulet of proof against detection and location* which certainly helps with this.

Alyshizia left Rauxes just before the outbreak of war and hid in the Adri forest with a bandit group. When she heard of Hastern's return to Edge Field, she flew there and betrayed her fellows, giving Hastern much information about the forest. Hastern rewarded her by giving her a *ring of human control* to deal with his liegeman Rinsharn, who he felt was not doing his job properly. Alyshizia now effectively controls the town of Stringen, and the baatezu among the troops are certainly her doing; she has not forgotten what she learned from Xaene. What her longer-term goals are, she isn't saying.

Note: The DM should also refer to the final chapter for details of mercenaries (as well as military units and marauding orcs) to be found in North Province.





# The Twin Cities

## A Strange Alliance

Historically, the cities of Rinloru and Winetha have not had the intimate intertwining which the now-used name "Twin Cities" implies. Winetha developed as a naval base and fishing town, and also a trade port for importing the goods the Sea Barons brought in from their isles and lands to the south. Rinloru developed rather later as a city set well back from the coast with an anchoring purpose. It supported and supplied the sea keeps north of Winetha, which defended the coast from barbarian raids between Atirr and the southern port. It also came to anchor a series of small garrisoned keeps which protected the inland farm hamlets and villages of the south. Thus, the two cities had complementary functions, but were not closely allied in any way.

Indeed, the noble houses owning the lands around the cities have traditionally had considerable enmity for each other. Rinloru has been in the keep of the House of Torquann for generations, as has Winetha been the fief of the House of Garasteth. Part of the feud between these Houses, indeed, concerns Garasteth claims to land south of Rinloru which that house asserts was obtained by banditry on the part of Torquann. Minor battles between hothead young princelings of these houses have been commonplace over the centuries, though serious large-scale conflict was usually avoided.

The events of the Greyhawk Wars, and two exceptional rulers, have changed this. Now the cities and their lands are locked in an unholy embrace. Both rulers are appallingly evil, but possessed of great magical strength, and rulers of adjoining lands do not dispute their land claims far beyond the Twin Cities even though only the remnants of disorganized armies are to be found beyond them. The fear of magical retribution is too strong, and the ghastly army of Rinloru in particular is one no one wishes to face on the plains of battle. United in evil, Delglath of Rinloru and Prince Lakaster of Winetha are nonetheless allies—of a sort. How this came to be is a strange tale indeed.

## Delglath the Animus-Priest

At the outbreak of war, Ivid decided that the then-ruler of Rinloru, Prince Grendemmen of Torquann, could not be trusted to support him. So, Ivid prepared to have Grendemmen and his immediate family slain, and looked around for an alternative, pliable, puppet ruler acceptable to Torquann and to himself. To place the lands in royal trust would have been an affront Ivid might have risked in peacetime, but not during war. So, Ivid chose Delglath for the role. A priest of Erythnul of no particular note, Delglath was swiftly appointed a judge of the sessions and then granted the title of prince with a minor land holding in royal trust within Ivid's own territories (this

has been revoked since, of course). Ivid then moved to slay Grendemmen, but his agents did not succeed in killing the prince's wife, and she remained in the Sand Castle of Rinloru, defying Ivid. In his rage, Ivid turned on the hapless Delglath and had him made an animus. Soon the news came that Grendemmen's wife had been successfully poisoned, and Ivid marched an army to place Delglath in command at Rinloru. It was one the worst mistakes he ever made.

At first, Delglath was not entirely displeased at becoming an animus. He was far more powerful than before, and his new servants and lackeys obviously feared him, which made him feel good. Unfortunately, Erythnul did not take it so well. Delglath found himself unable to spellcast, and was cast out of his priesthood.

That truly enraged Delglath. His faith was important to him. Delglath felt a cold, vile delight in hatred and brutality and had been getting a real appetite for more. Now his patron power had deserted him. Raging at his fate, the outcast invoked Nerull, the Reaper—and Nerull heard.

Soon, the court at Rinloru changed dramatically. From around the Flanaess, priests of Nerull were guided by their dreadful patron power to the city. They were not numerous, and the Reaper by no means guided all of his priesthood there, but those he chose were powerful, and they came by stealth and in disguise. With priests of Nerull spirited into his halls, Delglath slew a thousand souls in one night and animated them over the coming weeks as undead. To the assembled masses of the city, he proclaimed that he was now Delglath the Undying, and that any who opposed him or sought to escape his realm would not only be slain but subjected to torments after death which they could hardly even begin to imagine. Faced with a vast squad of undead flanking the red-robed maniac, whose own powers were evident from the serried ranks of people forced to kneel at his magical command, the survivors believed him. To be sure, thousands have successfully fled to other cities, but just as many more have suffered the awful agonies Delglath promised them.

Delglath has also gained experience very rapidly, becoming a formidable spellcrafter, and his dabbling in evil magic and artifacts makes him very dangerous.

## The Mage-Prince Lakaster

Prince Lakaster of Winetha has a brilliant, cold, evil mind. He is a mage with few equals in all the Flanaess. He always takes the long view; with his magical aids to longevity, he can afford to.

During the wars, Lakaster cooperated fully with Ivid's orders regarding the use of Winetha as a vital supply port and in cooperating with the Sea Barons. Lakaster saved himself that way, and he also saved the Winetha navy



which he confined to port for fear of barbarian sea raids. Indeed, shortly after Ivid demanded that Lakaster dispatch his vessels to Asperdi to support the Sea Barons (an order Lakaster refused), the barbarians raided the city and the defensive value of Winetha's six war galleys was vital in preserving the city. Ivid did not issue the same order to Lakaster again.

Lakaster is undisputed head of the House of Torquann in these lands. He has many liegemen, minor Torquann Princes, with small militias in the lands west and south of his city, and by and large he has been a responsible lord to them. He has not extracted heavy taxes and tithes from them, not needing to do so. Trade levies provide Winetha with enough wealth.

So, after the wars Lakaster is in a strong position. His military forces are intact. Winetha is subject to barbarian coastal raids, but these are not as severe as those inflicted on the Sea Barons. Trade has declined somewhat with Roland taking the lion's share of cargoes from the south, but the city is still reasonably affluent.

## The Alliance

So, why has the archmage-prince allied with the murderous, insane Nerull priest of Rinloru? Power and arrogance, as so often, are the keys.

The realities of power here center on two magical artifacts the Oeridians brought with them from their lands far to the west many centuries ago. One is the Mace and Talisman of Krevell, an evil priest of great might. The other is the Helm and Wand of Lynerden the Spinner, a mage of equal prowess to Krevell. The component parts of these artifacts are useful, but if the two parts of each are combined, they gain enormously in power. These artifacts have long been divided between the houses of

# The Twin Cities

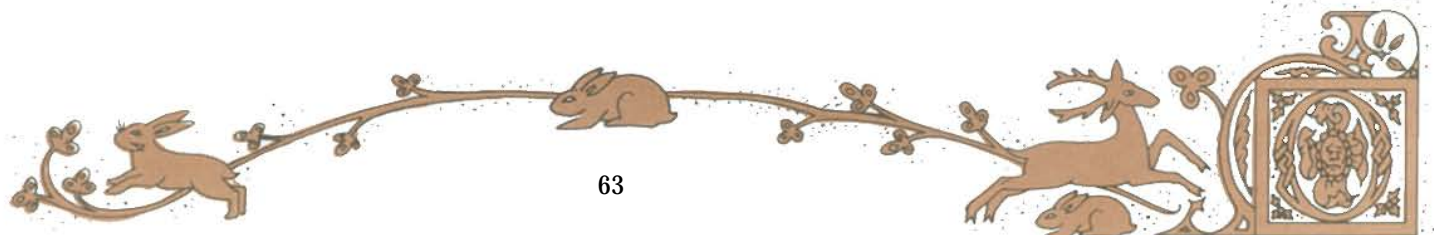
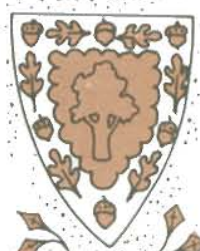
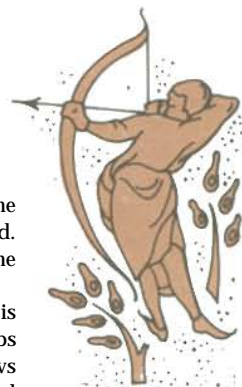
Garasteth and Torquann, and currently Delglath has the mace and helm, and Lakaster has the talisman and wand. Obviously, each desires the other half of the artifact he prizes so much.

Fighting each other for the other half of the artifact is something both rulers have kept from. Lakaster's troops fear the undead hordes of the west, while Delglath knows full well that the magic of an archmage and his renowned Court Wizards of Winetha—not to mention the fiendish allies and elementals they could muster—would present truly formidable opposition to his armies. Besides which, each spellcaster knows that the other will guard his portions of the artifacts with wards and spells which the other might not be able to breach. War is not an option here. Yet both men—archmage and animus—crave the great power of their artifact and have become obsessed with completing their great magic item.

So, emissaries have been dispatched and received, very coolly admittedly, but initial contacts have been made. The rulers have signed a treaty of mutual non-aggression. Each keeps his armies to his own lands and does not attack the lands of the other, and recognizes the land rights of the other. This has reassured the Torquann princelings to some extent. Delglath does not have to worry about Garasteth princelings since there are few left in his lands, and those still alive are virtual prisoners in their own keeps and mansions. Each spellcaster is now trying desperately to learn of the powers of each artifact when combined together, to test how much he would gain compared to the other. This takes much time, and prince and priest have an uneasy alliance in the interim. Both believe that they can vanquish the other, if only they had the full power of the magical artifact they want.

As intense magical studies proceed in Rinloru and Winetha, an infinitesimally thin strand of magical energy has come to link the Twin Cities. Some unique magical resonance links the artifacts and spellcasters, and this straight line of magical energy can be seen easily with a *detect magic* spell. The link has no magical effects, nor can it be dispelled; it is simply there. Mordenkainen believes that the strange coupling of artifacts and powerful spellcasters will generate an uncontrollable magical force which will ultimately result in a massive *Mordenkainen's disjunction* which will have decimating effects on the two men and their magical possessions and possibly create magic-dead areas around the Twin Cities. Most of the rest of the Flanaess had best wish that he is right. Whether he is, no one is daring to take on the might of these rulers, leaving them to their own strange interlocked pavanne of obsession and magical power.

The lands of Delglath and Lakaster are divided as shown. By treaty, neither side sends any troops into an area of six miles either side of this border. Sometimes wandering zombies or skeletons might stray into these lands out of control of one of Nerull's priests, but this is





# The Twin Cities

relatively rare, and they cause little damage in any event. In the Locations and Settlements sections below, the lands are divided, and the capital city of each is considered before the other locations.

## Delglath's Lands

Pop.: 160,000 + 16,000 undead (approx)  
Capital: Rinloru (pop. 17,100 + 3,500 undead)  
Ruler: Delglath the Undying  
Rulership: Variable  
Cost Multiplier: 160%

## Locations and Settlements

### Rinloru

Delglath's current policy is to gradually convert all ordinary folk into zombies. Skilled artisans and the like he must keep alive, since zombies are useless for skilled work, and of course people with adventuring abilities are important to his armies. However, Delglath is not wholly mad. He knows full well that the Rinloru Light Regiment, elite infantry, are important to any campaign of conquest, and their morale will hardly be improved by seeing all their families turned into zombies. Thus, Delglath concentrates on foreigners, orphans, the poorest folk of the city, and the like as initial targets. With about 3,000 zombies in the city already, he is making good progress.

What has happened to those surviving is the result of intense shock and a paradoxical passivity reaction. One might think that, faced with a charnel house of a city and the priests of Nerull in control, people would go to any lengths to flee. By now, exactly the reverse has happened. Many folk think they are virtually living dead, eking out the days until their turn comes. Their fate is inevitable. Resistance is futile.

Obviously, little trade flows through Rinloru now. What comes from the west detours southward to avoid this horrific city. Balancing this is the city's diminished need for money and food (an advantage of having undead legions as armies). Very few approach this place now.

Delglath has 25 priests of Nerull occupying the major administrative posts in the city. His human army commanders are all wholly cowed into submission, waiting for the next set of orders. Delglath makes it plain that a military campaign will ensue in late summer, though he does not reveal where the armies will march. So, Rinloru has an extraordinary atmosphere where despair, desperation, unmanageable tensions, and sheer gut-wrenching terror are all part of the mix.

Undead are everywhere here, mostly mindless, but with ghouls and attendant ghouls posted at strategic points. Delglath has not ordered the city plundered yet, and there is certainly gold and good reward awaiting any

who enter and begin to loot the richer residences. The city's buildings are stone, with typically thick walls, and are highly defensible; this was a fall-back garrison city after all. The most extraordinary building here, of recent construction and walled off separately from the rest of the city, is the famed Sand Castle.

The Sand Castle was built to evade the Castle Tax in the previous century. Since it is not made of stone, it was not liable to that tax. The ruler of the time didn't care that it cost 10 times as much to build as a stone castle, even with the tax element; he just wanted to spite the overking. The Sand Castle is constructed of sand magically treated to render it as hard as stone, together with great sheets of heat-fused sand (which looks like black opaque glass) treated with *glassteel* spells to toughen it. The resulting hybrid is a part-sandy, part-glass four-towered structure with a massive wooden gate and an extensive fortified inner keep with dungeons. This is where Delglath currently resides, and the lowest level of the keep has been decorated as a parody of the magistrate's chambers where judges of the sessions held court and gave judgments.

### The Nordan Villages

Delglath's lands have few substantial settlements, but the Nordan villages are the most noteworthy because of their increasing importance as a trade link from Winetha to the west, bypassing Rinloru. Each has about 1,200 people and a garrison. Note that High Nordan is actually across a border to the Naelax lands, and a large garrison has grown up there in response to Delglath's priestly and undead forces which maintain a strong presence in these villages, though they do not practice the mass executions and animations which occur in the capital. As yet there have been no clashes of armies of forces at these border points, but the powerful ruler of Delaric is taking no chances (see the chapter on the Naelax lands).

### Reaperkeep

This mage's tower (and fortified garrison houses) acted as a supply base for the eastern Sea Keeps, though these have declined in importance. The Necromancer of Reaperkeep (renamed from its pre-war title of Ratkeep) has thrown in his lot with the priests of Nerull who now control the base. The vermin which infest the dank, fetid dungeons below the keep grow fat and sleek these days, feeding on the remnants of the necromancer's researches. A command to peasant farmers to bring supplies here is dreaded, since many do not return. Reaperkeep has more powerful undead than in most outlying areas, including a group of 20 or so wights controlled by the necromancer and priests. It is said that the necromancer has somehow obtained a *blackwand* from the Lands of Iuz and is researching it, hoping to duplicate it in a form he and

# The Twin Cities

others in Delglath's service can use. Obviously, any concerned with checking the spread of evil in these lands would strike a powerful blow if they prevented this from happening.

## The Sea Keeps

The four keeps and northern tower (a weather-signalling beacon and mage's tower of old) protect the coastline, with each keep overlooking a small bay or inlet where military vessels could drop anchor and provision before sailing off to keep barbarians and pirates and bay. Each keep also has a lighthouse cupola atop it. Well over half of the troops here have fled, headed to Atirr or Winetha or even to the Sea Barons. There are not enough of Nerull's priests to control all these keeps, and the southernmost one is occupied solely by zombies with a vampire-mage as overseer. The result is that barbarian raids along the coast have escalated, and the barbarians have become aware of the presence of undead defenders, which they detest. If they raid here, they often bring one or more of the rare barbarian priests of Pelor with them, since such men are powerful in the art of turning undead. The coastline and the farmlands west have been largely depopulated here, people fearing the twin menaces of marauding barbarians and undead. And there are many abandoned farmsteads and ghost town hamlets here. Some of them have been occupied by men fleeing the wrath or evil of their liege, and they have become increasingly desperate bandits. These are dangerous and forlorn lands.

## Spinning Cloud

Spinning Cloud is a stone keep which hovers 200' in the air with a permanent *reverse gravity* effect (which cannot be dispelled save by a *wish*). The top story of the keep cannot be seen, since a permanent stationary white cloud envelops it. There has been no sign of the master of the keep, an elemental of air, for some five years now. Many consider that Jummenen has been lost on one of his forays into the Elemental Plane of Air. Whether this is true, anyone planning to loot the keep must beware the air elementals and invisible stalkers which guard it, not to mention braving a wealth of magical hazards within.

## Lakaster's Lands

Pop.: 140,000

Capital: Winetha (pop. 20,500)

Ruler: Prince Lakaster of the House of Garasteth

Rulership: Medium

Cost Multiplier: 110%

## Locations and Settlements

### Winetha

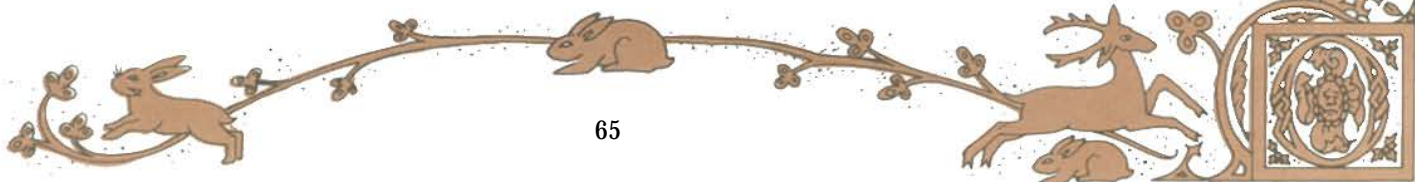
This city is almost as impregnable as Roland, with sea cliffs behind it and massive stone sea walls ringing the city below. Winetha is built along a long and narrow bay. It is overcrowded, for many have fled here from less safe lands.

Winetha boasts a large mages' guild and fine libraries and archives, protected by preservational spells against the corroding effect of damp, salty air. Most remarkable of all the signs of magecraft here are the legendary Coral Towers, flanking the sea gates which give access to the city harbor. These 100' tall, 80' diameter towers are crafted from roseate corals of the outlying Asperd Isles, melded by spellcraft and rendered as tough as steel. *Continual light* spells in great glass domes atop them are important beacons for ships, since the coastal currents here are strong, especially at times when Luna is full and the tides are high. Beneath the brilliant glow from the domes, wizards keep watch over the seas, aided by priests of Procan.

Winetha's mages meddle with almost everything in this city. Their alchemists have developed oils which protect bow strings against sea air, so that the longbowmen of the city are effective defenders. The sea gate system can be commanded to open and close by using the right command words (known only to the harbormaster mages), and so on.

Lakaster is certainly the most powerful of the 60 or so wizards of the city. He is no absolute ruler as Delglath is, for he must always submit his plans and proposals to the Council of Wizards here. They rarely oppose them, since few are politically inclined. And so long as Lakaster's plans don't stop them from pursuing their own arcane researches, they don't really care what he does. However, there are certainly tensions within the council concerning Lakaster's plan to trade artifacts with Delglath. The wizards fear Delglath, and they don't want Lakaster to become overwhelmingly powerful. Most hope that Delglath will never agree to the trade, but a few are concocting plans to attack Delglath's outlying troops and settlements with summoned monsters and servants to force Lakaster to abandon his alliance. That, in turn, might provoke Delglath to march on Winetha—and some of the wizards believe that the city could be defended against him. Others are not so sure.

Visitors to Winetha are carefully checked these days. An entry fee of 5 gp is payable per person, and a pass to the city is given entitling the bearer to stay for one week. The purpose of visiting, and where one intends to stay, must be divulged. And it is possible a member of the Town Guard may call to check up on the visitor. Regularly visiting sea vessels and merchants are known





# The Twin Cities

to the guards at the gates, and newcomers are usually interrogated carefully and thoroughly. The town has a considerable number of eccentrics and unusual delights, though visitors are warned that the Picked Eel Saveloys are not for those with sensitive stomachs.

## Pearl Beacon

This great sea keep with its glorious lighthouse is the home of a very unusual noble—Prince Harley of the House of Garasteth. Harley is a real rarity; in his youth he studied dutifully as a mage, as so many Garasteth children do, but he hated it. In his mid-20s he adopted the faith of Olidammara. It was a huge relief for him. He took to drink, song, and women as a seagull to the sky, and in the deadly seriousness of the lands of the Twin Cities, Pearl Beacon is an ocean of lightheartedness. Nearly 2,000 people live in shanty towns around the old sea village here, and somehow they scratch out a living. Fishing is the staple source of work and food, but the pearls of the bay below the keep (which give it its name, as well as the pearly-hued *continual light* lighthouse beacon) are an extra prize for the diligent scavenger of the seabed. There are a number of wrecks along the coast here, and they too attract adventurers seeking riches. Most times they find no sunken gold, but find Pearl Beacon is a fine place to stay, at least for a summer.

Harley has managed to make peace with the barbarians by simply challenging them to drinking contests. The barbarians were bemused by such an unusual response to their arrival in the bay, but they know a priest of Olidammara when they see one, and they also know a ruler who can hold his liquor when they wake up beneath the table and find him calling for another hornful of fiery akvavit. Pearl Beacon also trades with the Sea Barons, though most vessels head for Winetha rather than to this southern outpost.

So, Pearl Beacon is as close to a riotous, happy seaport as one will find along the east coast. It carries the attendant dangers; thieves and cut-throats throng this settlement, since rulership here is low. But Harley is a ruler who the wise and bright do not dismiss as the drunken rake he appears to be. He has still his old talents as a competent mage, and his priestly talents are considerable (he is a 9th-level mage/12th-level priest). He is smart, cunning, and behind his jests and quips lie a very alert mind, fast on the uptake. There are rumors that aquatic elves, who have long abandoned most of the coastal waters and even the Asperd Isles for the new elven lands of Spindrift, have been seen at Pearl Beacon. Some whisper by night that a blue-skinned elf, not an aquatic one to be sure, has been seen visiting Prince Harley's floridly-decorated home, and the name of Mordenkainen himself has been uttered by one or two folk—after they had too much to drink.

Finally, the shrine to Procan here is maintained by Harley's own funds, and a blessing from the priests is greatly valued by seamen. The priests are said to have exceptional skills, and to have the favor of Procan himself. It is also said that their blessings minimize the chance of encountering fearsome sea monsters or sudden fogs or storms in the Solnor Ocean, and some vessels will travel out of their way to bring gold or other gifts to the temple in return for this blessing.

## Treltern

Lakaster himself owns about half the lands in his domain, the rest being owned by minor Garasteth and Torquann nobles. Of the many hamlets and villages in these lands, Treltern is the most sizeable with 1,600 people, a well-equipped local militia, and a strategic position along the southern trade route to Orred. Even some goods headed for or out of Delaric come this way now, following the *dirawaen* roads to Wendarn and then northward, though that is a hazardous route with so many miles to be covered within the overking's claimed lands. Treltern is noted for a fine bardic collection of old poems and songs, surprising in such a small place; it was established by Nightsong of Delaric long before his alignment change, and indeed that legendary bard was born here. Few, however, would wish to see him return. Nonetheless, there is a faint whiff of magic about the recitatorium here, and Treltern has a reputation for producing musically-gifted people as well as fine poetic and declamatory bards.

## Personalities of the Twin Cities

While Rinloru has some important priests of Nerull and Winetha has some noteworthy mages, the two major protagonists of the strange alliance concern us here. Their "supporting cast" is deliberately left open for development.

**Animus-Priest Delglath:** Animus with the powers of 13th-level priest of Nerull and additional abilities (see below, and Wis 18). AC 6 (*ring of protection* +4), hp 88, AL NE. Delglath has all the special powers and abilities of an animus, but he has one additional talent. At will, he can cause blisters to rise on the palms of his hands which secrete a smoking, corrosive acid. This does not harm Delglath, but his touch inflicts 1d4+4 hp of damage per round his palms are in contact with the skin of anyone else, and the acid corrodes cloth in one round, wood at the rate of 1" thickness per round, and metal at the rate of .25" thickness per round. Magical items receive the standard saving throw against destruction by acid; nonmagical items do not. "Delglath's blessing" is a laconic Rinloru saying which refers to this dreaded touch.

Delglath sees himself as a Chosen One of Nerull. In one

# The Twin Cities

respect, his view has some validity. Though he is but 13th level, he is a powerful enchanter of magical items (consider him as equivalent to a 20th-level priest for this). Delglath even has been to the Causeway of Fiends to take stone he polished, crafted, and enchanted to create his *talisman of ultimate evil* which he wears with pride. He has other magical items, of course; these include a *great sickle* +2, +3 versus good-aligned creatures, a *ring of X-ray vision*, and a *brooch of shielding* with 71 charges remaining.

Delglath has the typical wizened, wrinkled appearance of the animus. He has long, flowing white hair which he braids in the style of old Aerdi nobles, and blue eyes which are unblinking. As a personality, he is consumed with the desire to render Aerdy into a kingdom of the undead with himself atop the malachite throne. But he is wily and cunning, and while insane he knows this is not a goal he can aim at right now. He seeks no alliances, and he has eliminated all who oppose him within his own lands. He intends to do the same everywhere else. Once he has the talisman, Winetha will be his first target. Rauxes will be next.

**Archmage-Prince Lakaster:** 19th-level mage (Dex 16, Con 15, Int 18). AC 0 (black robes of the Archmagi, ring of protection +3), hp 49, AL LE (NE). Lakaster is chronologically 77 years of age, but due to two *potions of longevity* and his possession of an *amulet of perpetual youth* (see Tome of Magic) he is biologically only 35 (this becomes 57 if his amulet is removed). He is an imposing 6' 5", slim, graceful; the blond archmage has boyish good looks, a broad white-toothed smile, and friendly hazel eyes. He is a thoroughly evil power-maniac, however. Still, he is brilliant and urbane, and he is worldly-wise. He knows the value of alliance, having time to develop one's strength when facing an enemy—and of the value of one well-planned, lightning-swift, devastating strike (preferably with a streak of wanton cruelty).

Lakaster has many magical items. His *quarterstaff* +5 has the additional magical properties, usable once a day, each using one charge: *spectral force*, *suggestion*, *wall of fire*, *wall of stone*. The staff is recharged by being plunged into one gallon of fresh blood from an intelligent, humanoid creature, and Lakaster has no compunctions about recharging it when he needs to do so. Lakaster always wears his *Serten's ring*, which confers on him a permanent *Serten's spell immunity*. Whether this ring truly belonged to that legendary archmage, who can say? Lakaster certainly isn't saying.

Lakaster is on fair terms with the Sea Barons, but has few other contacts among local nobles. He is too obsessed with desire for the Wand of Lynerden to bother with politics now. Night and day he labors to research the combined powers of the wand and helm of that fabled wizard, and his researches continue to yield conflicting answers. Any who could provide him with the truth

would be very well rewarded by this archmage-prince, who has a fair collection of Asperd pearls and similar valuables among his personal wealth.

## Magical Artifacts

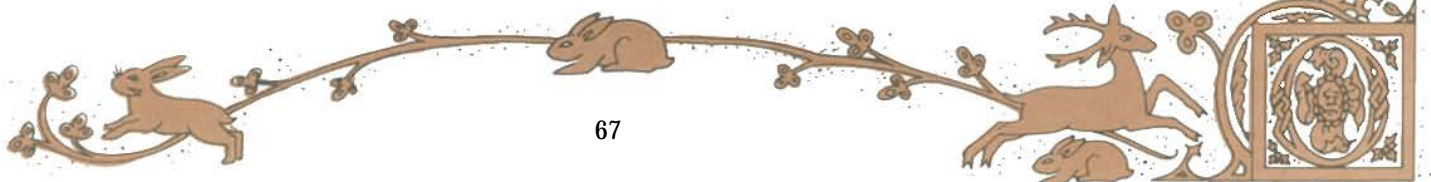
### The Mace and Talisman of Krevell

Krevell was a dreaded priest of Nerull, and his baneful items have the appropriate magical qualities. On its own, the mace is a *mace* +4 which can cast *animate dead* once a day and *energy drain* three times a week by touch. Alone, the talisman can *cause paralysis* once a day in a 20' radius around its user. Either item only can be used by an evil-aligned individual with spellcasting ability. If the two are held by a priest of Nerull, however, their combined power is vastly enhanced. The functions above can be used seven times more frequently, and the following powers are gained, one per week each: *destruction*, *gate* (to Nerull's home plane), *unholy word*, *symbol of death*. The owner of both items can adopt *wraithform* at will, *gate* himself and up to 10 attendants to the Negative Material Plane at will without ill-effect once a month, and can command undead as a 20th-level priest, with double the usual number being affected. No mindless undead (zombies, skeletons, etc.) will attack the bearer of the mace and talisman even if so commanded. And intelligent, free-willed undead, such as vampires and liches, must make a saving throw versus spells to be able to attack the bearer each round. All spell effects are at 14th level of magic use for the mace and talisman individually, and at 20th level when combined.

### The Helm and Wand of Lynerden the Spinner

Such was the power of the ancient Oeridian mage Lynerden that the individual items of this pairing are powerful indeed, though neither can be used save by a nonspecialist mage. The helm, if worn, gives a -3 AC bonus and +3 to all saving throws against attempts at mental control or possession (*charm*, *domination*, *magic jar*, etc.). It can also cast *color spray*, *improved phantasmal force* and *shadow magic* each once a day. The wand grants its user a +3 bonus against all fire- and cold-based attacks, and can also be used to cast *fireball* and *cone of cold* each once a day. When both items are held by the same archmage, however, the following magical powers also can be cast, each once a day: *delayed blast fireball*, *incendiary cloud*, *mass invisibility*, *meteor swarm*, *screen*. In addition, a *limited wish* can be cast once a week, and a full *wish* can be cast once every three months, save that after 1d4+1 wishes this function is lost. Spell effects are at 14th level for the helm or wand, and at 20th level when combined.

The functions of each half of the pair of artifacts are



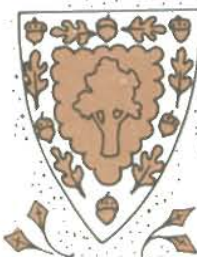
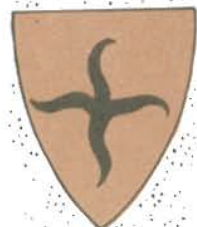




## The Twin Cities

readily ascertainable by the usual means (*identify, legend lore, etc.*). However, the combined properties are almost impossible to sry unless one possesses both halves. Delglath and Lakaster busily interrogate extraplanar beings, pore over old tomes, and so on. Lakaster has even expended a *wish* to learn more, but to no avail. The truth

only can be found (if one does not possess both halves of an artifact) in the original writings of Krevell and Lynerden the Spinner. If any copies of their works survive, they are in far-flung places, perhaps guarded by powerful mages, fiends, or worse.



# The Adri Forest

The Adri Forest is perhaps but half the size it was when the Great Kingdom was founded, but it is still large and shelters many peoples and creatures. The whole of the forest has been regarded as part of the Great Kingdom historically, though the lands west of the Harp River were considered part of Almor or Nyronnd for a time. As detailed in this chapter, the forest can be divided into three distinctively different regions:

- (1) The ancient, deep forest woodland. Here, few humans enter, and the terrain is fraught with danger.
- (2) The remaining bulk of the woodland. This is home to foresters, rangers, bandits and others.
- (3) The city of Innspa and the forested hills. The hills add to the southern extension of the Flinty Hills range.

## The Adri Woodlands

About 90% of the mass of the Adri is mixed deciduous woodland, with the broad and sluggish Harp River cutting a swathe through it to the west. The forest is plentiful with game, and its fringes always have seen their share of nobles out hunting. In addition to deer, the rabbits of the forest are plentiful and are trapped for food, as are squirrels, mink-like animals, and larger birds. Fishing is productive along the banks of the Harp. Add to this good supplies of mushrooms, herbs, fruiting plants, berries, and tubers, and the riches of the forest are easily enough to support the 25,000 or so people who dwell permanently within the forest confines.

Races other than humans are rare outside the deep forest. There are a few hundred wood elves, no more, and very few high elves or forest gnomes. The demihumans who live in this forest keep to themselves, and they defend their homes with snares, tripwires, pit and net traps, and poisoned weapons. There are so few of them that they do not take chances with outsiders. This applies even to the normally peaceable gnomes.

This is a surprise to many who do not know the history of the forest. The elves have a good reason for disliking this forest, as the history of the Coldwood reveals. Likewise the gnomes, who might have been expected to have taken to the wooded hills, shun them. Their avoidance is explained in the notes on Innspa and the hills below.

This leaves a human population which, though sizeable, is sparse in terms of people per square mile. There are areas of the Adri where no man has ever set foot.

So far as costs and availability of goods go, food is readily accessible, but most other goods are almost unavailable at any price—save for such simple weapons as spears, bows, arrows, and battle axes.

## The Forest Folk

### Foresters

Most humans who live here make a living from fishing, trapping, hunting, and plant gathering. Thus, they are foresters rather than woodsmen. Most of the folk who make a living taking wood from the forest for the manufacture of spears, bows, arrows, and ships live outside the forest in farmsteads and small hamlets. These woodsmen grow more determined and callous in their cutting down Adri wood because their lords demand it of them. The foresters react in different ways to this invasion and to the much more threatening incursions of other factions; bandits, humanoids, and militias. Some have reacted aggressively by setting lethal traps for those who come to their forest, others have retreated into the deeper woodlands or to the new, larger, fortified settlements which have sprung up or grown larger over the past few years.

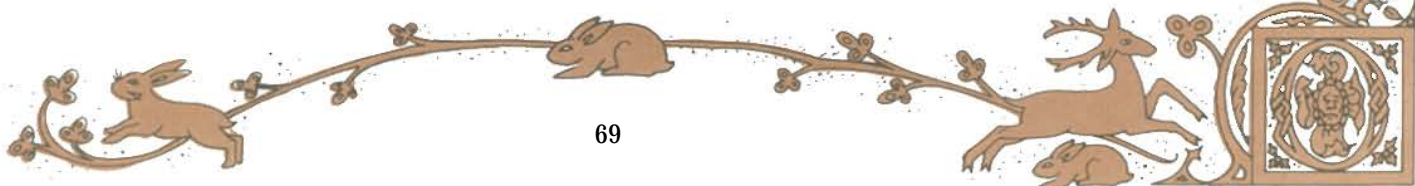
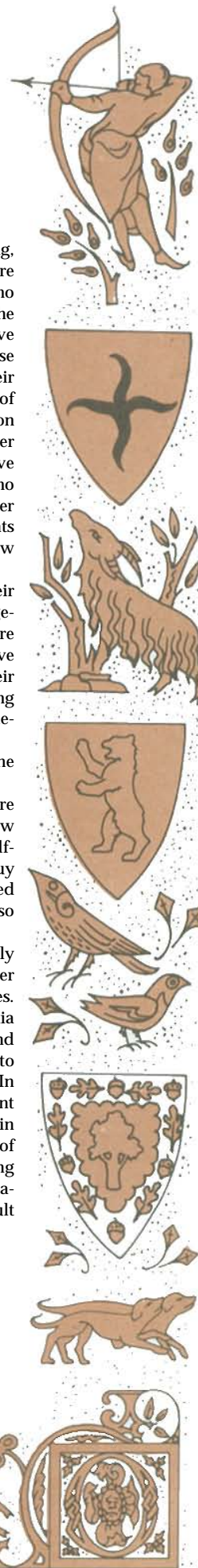
Decades ago, foresters lived alone, often with their families, in timbered huts, except in areas where indigenous forest humanoids were anything other than a rare menace. Now, this is unusual. Groups of families live together, and ditches and palisade walls protect their dwellings. These settlements have been built (or are being built now) deeper into the forest—deeper than settlements into other forests.

The main threats to the foresters come from outside the forest rather than within.

The Adri foresters are a mix of alignments, but are predominantly chaotic. A forester whose family has a few chickens for eggs and a goat for milk is virtually self-sufficient, needing perhaps one trading trip a year to buy leather, cloth, cooking pans, and a few other finished items. They are tough folk (Con of 6+2d6). They are also suspicious of any outsiders, and with good reason.

Foresters' hamlets (any population of 30+) are regularly patrolled, day and night. The forest men favor leather armor, longbows or short bows, spears, and battle axes. But some have weapons taken from the bodies of militia from beyond the forest—longswords, heavy maces, and the like. They tend to band together in small groups to hunt, check traps, or collect berries and mushrooms. In many areas, the foresters have taken to smearing plant and berry extracts on their skins to disguise themselves in the woods. The DM should allow foresters a chance of hiding in shadows in woodlands, with this chance being 15% +2% per experience level. As a random determination for foresters, the DM may use a d100 roll for adult men and women:

D100	Result
1-85	Normal Man (Woman)







# The Adri Forest

86-95	1st level fighter
96-97	2nd level fighter
98	3rd level fighter
99	4th level fighter
00	Reroll:
1-15	NM/W,
16+	fighter of level 3+1d6

## Rangers

Since the Great Kingdom is not noted for its many good-aligned people, that there are few rangers in the Adri is no surprise. Moreover, there is a schism within their ranks. Two powerful ranger lords compete for the spirit of the Adri rangers; one Lawful, one Chaotic.

From his base at Elversford, Parren Ludern stresses constantly the need to organize forces to defend the forest. He is charismatic, and has the blood of the House of Cranden in his veins, giving him some aristocratic kudos. Parren has had some notable successes, strengthening Elversford and negotiating with Captain-General Osmeran of Cordrend in Nyron. Osmeran instructs his elven mage Nukirien to *teleport* to Elversford, bringing small quantities of crafted weapons, potions, and the like in return for herbs and food which Osmeran badly needs. Osmeran and Parren also cooperate militarily. A joint venture by them recently employed foresters and rangers

as a feint to lure away defenders from a military garrison outside Innspa some months ago, allowing Osmeran's men to attack those remaining in the camp, inflicting serious casualties and retrieving useful supplies.

Those rangers allied with Parren wear insignia to identify themselves and their relative rank. A small lime-green stripe is worn on the right sleeve by rangers of levels 1-2; two stripes for those of levels 3-5; three stripes by those of levels 6-8; and three stripes with an inverted chevron above by the handful of levels 9+. The alignments of these rangers, perhaps 80 in number throughout the forest, are: LG, 50%; NG, 40%; CG, 10%.

There are those who do not like this militaristic organization. It is too similar to the regimented life which many of the Adri people fled from beyond the forest, and it is not without its dangers. After the Innspa raid, Aerdy militias did their best to retaliate with forays against the foresters to the west. They only killed a few, but next time the retaliation might be more powerful and cost many more lives.

Rangers not allied with Parren have more sympathy for the other best-known ranger of the forest, Prisstyne Carnhuis. Prisstyne's rangers form a very loose alliance, without rank or order, communicating on an ad hoc basis when necessary. They have no base similar to Elversford and travel widely throughout the Adri, not necessarily just patrolling the borders of the larger settlements as Parren's rangers tend to do. They also have better understandings with nonhuman forest dwellers, such as the wood elves, the sentinels, and the few faerie folk. Many speak one or more additional languages, such as elven or a faerie tongue. The very few half-elven rangers of the forest are almost all among Prisstyne's followers. There are perhaps 60 such, and their alignments are: NG, 30%; CG, 70%.

These two groups are not antagonistic. They simply don't cooperate very much. They have different views on how the Adri is best defended, but their lack of cooperation may yet cost the forest dear.

## Druids and Nature Priests

There are small numbers of several nature priesthoods within the Adri. A handful of priests of Beory, Atroa, and Phytan have taken refuge here over the years, but the most important priesthoods are those of Obad-hai and Ehlonna. Ehlonna's priests often term themselves "druids," not least to challenge the authority of Obad-hai's druids.

Obad-hai's priesthood is the most numerous in the Adri. Archdruid Immonara has lived in the Adri for more than 80 years, some say, and for all that there are few signs of age on her face. Immonara has many affiliations, unusually for a druid of this reclusive faith. She talks to both Parren and Prisstyne, and is associated with the

## The Adri Forest

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cartography by Michael Scott



# The Adri Forest

Brothers of the Bronze, the Nyronde group of druids, rangers, and others who try to protect the Celadon and Gamboge forests in Nyronde. Immonara is one of very few able to walk the deep forest in safety, and she has an unparalleled knowledge of forest lore. She knows the old mysteries and dangers of the forest, and the true tale of the Coldwood. Since Griffith Adarian's finding of an ancient relic close by (see City of Greyhawk, Folk, Feuds and Factions book), Immonara warns her other druids to be wary of travel therein. Immonara's druids are forest wanderers, rarely staying long at any settlement. They do not seek confrontations with raiding militias or humanoids as Parren's rangers often do. Very often a druid of Obad-hai just happens to be on the spot at the time, using *entanglement*, *snare*s, *spike growths* and the like to confound raiders.

The druids of Obad-hai also have friends among the wood elves, the few forest gnomes of the Adri, and other nonhumankind. They are a gentle priesthood, introverted, lacking in aggression, and they also keep confidences to themselves. They are exceptionally skilled in herbalism, and any druid of Obad-hai of 3rd or higher level is able to prepare herbal draughts and remedies which can: (a) cure 1d4 hp; (b) have a 50% chance for curing disease (if a natural disease); and (c) if administered within 10 minutes of a person or animal being poisoned, allow a fresh saving throw versus poison and, if that saving throw is made, the herbal curative neutralizes the poison (though it will not undo any adverse effects which have already occurred). Druids of 7th and higher levels have an even more advanced natural pharmacopeia, though they do not reveal the secrets of their recipes.

Ehlonna's smaller priesthood is rather more outgoing and even aggressive. It has no leader of similar stature to Immonara, but Lisara Elmhern is a fiery and exceptionally astute priestess who often speaks for this group in conclaves with rangers and outsiders. A handful of these priests have organized into a martial faith, stressing the strength of the forest and the power of the life-force Ehlonna epitomizes. This group, calling itself the Warriors of the Huntress, specializes in combat and protection spells and actively organizes with Parren's rangers and forester-fighters to attack those who threaten the Adri. The famed warrior-bard Lukan the Boar is allied with the Warriors of the Huntress, and he is rumored to be Lisara's lover.

## Bandits

In addition to the forest's indigenous folk, at any time there are perhaps 2,000 or so bandits in the Adri. They are a varied lot. Some have been outlaws within the forest for many years, and have come to know the paths and ways of the forest. Others are army deserters or farm folk fled

during the wars or the months since. And the most recent of these arrivals are as likely to die from eating poisonous fungi mistaken for edible mushrooms as from any other cause. Very few—only those who have lived here for several years or more—have any permanent, defended settlements. The majority are feral scavengers, raiding farmlands and farmsteads outside the forest for the most part. They tend to be poorly equipped and have wretched morale, although there are a handful of exceptions (see location entry for Sharpwall below).

## Other Folk

Perhaps 1,000 orcs, half this number of gnolls, and a handful of bugbears are indigenous forest dwellers. Their numbers have been diminished to the northeast as Hastern has recruited them (at sword-point, usually) into his militias. They present little threat to the foresters, since they leave obvious telltale signs of entering forest areas and foresters are usually able to avoid them and anticipate any serious raiding they might make from time to time. They have no major settlements and tend to roam in small bands of 5-20 or so, scavenging whatever they can.

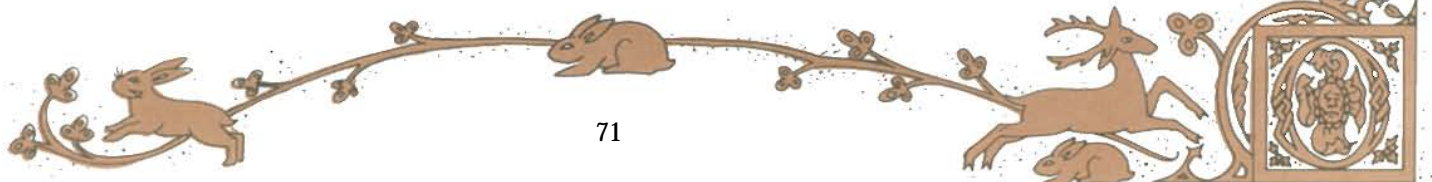
There are few faerie creatures (dryads, pixies, nixies in the river, etc.) outside of the deep forest—save for brownies. Many a forester's hamlet has a brownie living nearby, and a few have a prized killmoulis somewhere among the wooden ceiling beams. The foresters are very superstitious about these little folk, and always provide saucers of milk, beer, and food. There is a common belief that the little people like candied sweets, which are made from fruit sugars. Brownies are also friendly to Prisstyne's rangers in particular, and often leave telltale warning signs for them along their preferred trails and paths if dangers lie ahead.

## The Strategic Picture

The Adri is raided from many directions, but its problems are more severe in particular areas.

## Northeastern Forest

Here, the militias and axemen of Hastern of Naelax and his liegemen are constant raiders into the forest. Humanoids in Hastern's service make extended forays into the forest, venturing up to 50-60 miles from their bases beyond it, hunting for slaves, food, anything they can scavenge and despoil. Many foresters have left the area, but as the forays get deeper and deeper, the time comes when they will be forced to defend at least the margins of deeper settlements.





# The Adri Forest

## Southeastern Forest

Strychan of Dustbridge has little interest in the Adri, and few of the other Naelax nobles to the south have Hastern's policy of systematic raiding. Their axemen and soldiers loot the margins of the Adri, but do not penetrate deeply into the forest. This area is thus defensible, and settlements have not retreated so far back into the forest as elsewhere.

## Southwestern Forest

There are no organized military threats to this area, but the few creatures which enter the Adri from the wretched Almorian borderlands may be insanely powerful, intensely evil, or both. Thus, the few dangers which present themselves here are of exceptional strength. Defensive measures have been taken along the northern bank of the Harp just inside the forest here, and foresters who once lived south of that river have tended to retreat across the river to safer northern lands. The gazetteer chapter for the Almorian lands gives extra details.

## Northwestern Forest

The description of Innspa and the borderlands gives more details. In theory, the forces amassed in the chaotic margins of the forest could be overwhelming, but the soldiers and humanoids here expend much energy fighting each other rather than raiding the forest. This is why Prisstyne is currently so angry with Parren. She is concerned that his cooperation with Osmeran threatens to turn the attentions of the disorganized factions against the forest and, if this happens, woe betide the forest.

## Alliance?

Many Adri folk secretly long for union with Nyronnd. Indeed, many have relatives there. Now that Almor has fallen, they believe that only Nyronnd can preserve them from the evils of the Great Kingdom. Unfortunately, most Adri folk have little true idea of what is going on in the outside world. Most speak of the Great Kingdom as if it still existed as a single entity. Few can comprehend the state into which Nyronnd has fallen. They might hear news from outside (though not often), but they do not truly understand and comprehend it. This is a naive people for the most part, too long isolated in their forest home to understand the momentous changes outside it.

## Locations and Settlements

As noted, there are few permanent settlements of any size in this forest, and few dangerous ruins or magical areas outside the deep forest. The DM should feel free to add unusual sites to the brief list given here, though strongly

magical and dangerous areas are perhaps best placed in the deep forest.

## Elversford

The fortified village of Elversford has nearly 1,000 people behind its wooden walls and network of flooded ditches. Built on the bank of the river, a shallow moat has been created around the village. The waters are no more than four feet deep, deliberately to tempt any force attacking the village to try its luck wading through. The submerged metal-tipped spears beneath the moat waters would then inflict most unpleasant injuries on those entering. The iron tips have rusted, of course; but that's all the better for inflicting blood poisoning on anyone suffering a wound from a spear. The village has a wooden gatehouse with a drawbridge which is lowered to allow access to Elversford from the land.

Elversford is the major trading post for the Adri. Of course, there is little trade now, but a precious trickle of armor, weapons, and a handful of minor magical items makes its way here by one means or another. Mages such as Nukirien can *teleport* here. A few brave souls from Nyronnd, who may have Adri relatives, even risk the Harp River from points west of Innspa or head down the southern spur of the Flinty Hills. These latter visitors are rare, however, simply because of the severe threats such travel poses. Few try these routes, and considerably fewer survive. Only those with magical protections (*invisibility 10' radius* and the like) come back more than once.

Elversford is well defended by Parren's ranger patrols, and the forest bowmen atop the wooden walls of the village are deadly shots (Dexterity scores of 12+1d6 for the 25 elite bowmen). There are two young mages (3rd and 5th level). At any time, their mentor Nukirien (a 10th-level mage) will be within the village. There are also a handful of priests of Ehlonna and other powers in the village, so that low-level spell defense is strong.

The people of Elversford are forced to forage into the forest for days at a time in search of food, simply because a settlement this size cannot support itself by fishing and livestock keeping. In a 20-mile radius east of the river, there are forester's huts along some of the most-traveled trails which are used by such foragers to rest and sleep. They always leave some food and water behind for those who come after them. Some of these have tiny, hidden chambers below the ground which have been laboriously dug out. A trapdoor, concealed below straw or matting above, gives access. Some foresters sleep in these tiny, lightless chambers, hoping that any raiders who might happen by will open the hut, see no one is there, and just take the food and depart. One or two lives have been saved this way, though the forest orcs have tumbled to the trick by now and know to look for such hidden trapdoors. Anyone caught in the chamber beneath is not

# The Adri Forest

necessarily a sitting target, for there are usually cross-bows beneath them which can be set to fire at anyone opening the covering when a woodsman is asleep inside.

Elversford is the first place to come for characters in search of important Adri NPCs. Parren is usually here, and he knows where others such as Prisstyne, Lisara and Lukan can be found if they are not actually in Elversford when characters visit. Any characters who bring weaponry or similarly prized goods will be very welcome in Elversford—though Parren and the village elders will certainly want to know where any visitors come from and what their business is. Anyone approaching will be detected well before they get to the settlement.

## Erianrhel

This is a ruined treehouse settlement of the wood elves of the forest, abandoned by them long ago when the Coldwood came into being. The houses are long overgrown with trailing vines, creepers and moss, and the elves left little behind them. Foresters are very superstitious about this place, and so are the humanoids of the Adri. Neither will approach within several miles of Erianrhel. They fear that elvish or faerie enchantment will steal them from the mortal world, never to return.

Rangers and druids know better. There are some faerie creatures here, but none are hostile. The most notable permanent occupant is Elmennanibinaquen ("Elmen" to humans), a young (9 HD) elm treant. By treant standards, Elmen is friendly and talkative, but he has an intrinsic ability to *know alignment* and avoids evil folk. Elmen is, in his way, something of a sage among younger treants, and he possesses telepathic abilities. For example, he can use *ESP* at will. Elmen knows of events in the deep forest, and he also knows much about the Grandwood. Gywdiesin has traveled here, and Elmen speaks approvingly of him: "The only human I've ever met who understood that a conversation only begins to get interesting after the first two settings of the sun." Elmen's faerie and small animal and bird friends have an excellent up-to-date knowledge of what happens in their area, and will help good-aligned forest travelers and those actively seeking to defend the forest.

## Ettin's Mound

The site of an ancient battle between Flan and Oeridians, Ettin's Mound is a single hillock jutting out from the forest, an isolated extension of the forested western hills. Most unusually, there is a tribe of ettins below the mound, perhaps 15 or so in a great extended family. These ettins are led by a monstrous chieftain with 16 HD, and they obey the dictates of Iron Grandfather from sheer fear. The ettins have looted most of the items buried with the dead below the mound, though some may remain. Iron Grandfather has a *horn of fog* which he uses to best

effect in the ettins' battle forays and a wrought iron *brooch of shielding* which has the additional property of *hasting* the wearer once a week without any aging effect. His name acknowledges this artifact, as well as his vast strength and tyrannical nature.

Foresters and rangers give the area around a wide berth. The ettins are a threat to any humans they find. Iron Grandfather has a particular hatred of humanoids, and the ettins usually slay orcs, kobolds, and others. A spit roast of ogre stuffed with orc stuffed with kobold is a prized delicacy. Why the old, huge ettin has this especial hatred is unknown. Why the ettins tattoo their forearms with the motif of a lightning bolt which looks astonishingly similar to the holy symbol of Heironeous is also a mystery.

## Goldchasm

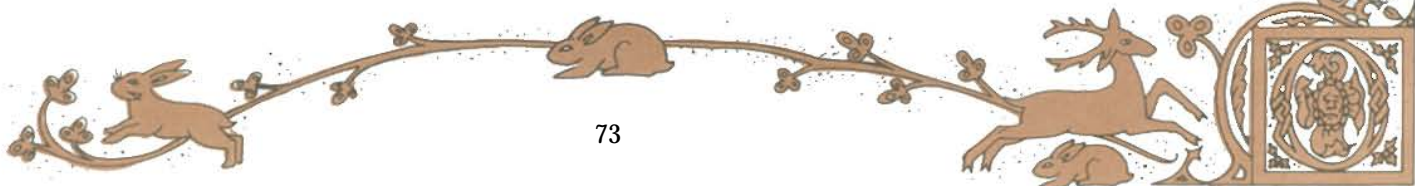
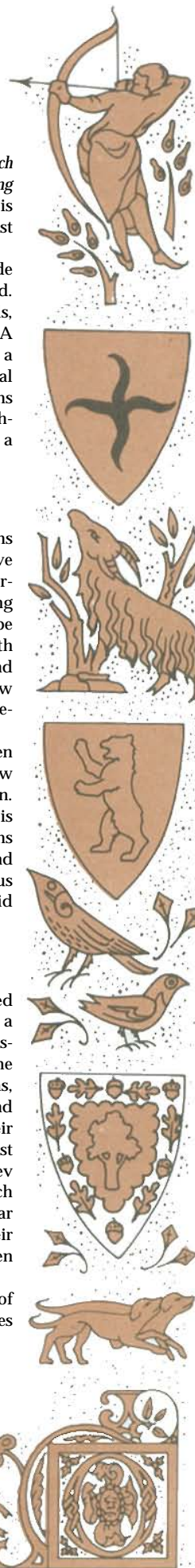
Along a 15-mile narrow stretch of forest, rocky chasms cleave hundreds of feet below the forest floor. Cave complexes honeycomb some of the rifts. This is dangerous terrain, because the chasms appear to shift, closing and reforming, sometimes at a rate fast enough to be visible to the onlooker. It is said that powerful earth elementals, maybe dao, live far below these rifts, and some who have ventured here say the deeper caves show signs of svirfneblin activity. There even might be passageways to the Underdark within the area.

Goldchasm is so named because there have been discoveries of veins of that metal here, and a few moonstone and chrysoberyl deposits into the bargain. Few try to recover these valuables, however. Mining is impossible because of the shifting structure of the chasms and caves, and the dangers of entrapment underground are all too real. As a result, monsters and dangerous animals—even worgs—prowl the area, which is devoid of forester settlements.

## Sharpwall

Named after the palisade wall logs with their sharpened flint tops, Sharpwall boasts a strong central keep with a dozen wooden cabins. The Johrase bandit Kavern Egriassen, a 9th-level fighter, has set up camp here with some 25 equally vicious men from the Bandit Kingdoms, fleeing the forces of Iuz far to the northwest. Kavern and his men are well-armed and equipped, and among their number is a bandit with a good knowledge of forest plants and preparations from his days in the Fellreev Forest. He brews paralyzing and disabling venoms which the bandits use on spears and arrows. They make regular patrols looking for foresters, who they subdue with their venomous weapons and nets. These unfortunates are then sold as slaves, usually in Edge Field.

Kavern is tolerated as an opportunist by Hasteron of Edge Field, because he brings a steady trickle of slaves





# The Adri Forest

into the city and offers no threat to Hastern's forces. Indeed, Kavern even sells them food when those forces enter the Adri, and sells information to the leader accompanying them.

## The Deep Forest

As shown on the map, there are three tracts of deep forest; the Coldwood and two other, smaller, tracts of tangled heavy woodland. The Coldwood is a special, fell place of great peril. The other two areas have their own dangers.

In deep forest generally, monsters such as ettercaps and lyrannikin are a menace, and in one or two boggy places will o' wisps are likewise dangerous. There are more benign faerie beings outside of the Coldwood, but they shun human contact save for a few druids of Obad-hai whom they trust. These lands were once part of a much greater tract of deep forest, and the faerie beings blame humanity for the terrible fate which befell so much of their home.

The key to this hostility lies in the tale of the Coldwood, which reaches back into pre-history.

## Darnakurian's Doom

At the heart of what is now the Coldwood, a great and majestic elven city once stood. Crafted from living woods, marble, silver, and even ice, the City of the Summer Stars was home to perhaps 2,000 gray elves. They were an introverted, studious, mystical people, and they sought no dominion outside their homelands. The spells and lore known to them is virtually beyond comprehension in the Flanaess now. By a wave of her hand, Queen Sharaferé could make winds ripple through all the endless miles of the great forest, and summon unicorns, treants, and the beasts and birds of the forest to her glittering palace.

The demise of this race is a dreadful tragedy which few alive today know of. Those who know the tale do not speak of it. Mordenkainen, Philidor, Gywdiesin, Calendryen of the Vesve, Immonara, and the Silverbow Sages of the Lendore Isles are among that rare few, and perhaps one or two other mortals.

The City of the Summer Stars received emissaries from the Ur-Flannae. Those necromancers and wizards spoke honeyed words, but Sharaferé saw the lust for magical power in their hearts and sent them away. In their rage and desire to possess the magic of the elves, the Ur-Flannae brought their own magic to assault the city. Fire and acid rained down from the skies. Fiends stalked the forests. Bulettes, xorn, and other monsters erupted from the very earth to strike at the foundations of the city.

Sharaferé knew the city could hold against this assault, but the forest around was screaming its agony at the defoliation and slaughter which covered thousands of

square miles. The undead and monsters of the invaders seemed countless in number; the elves slew thousands and still the Ur-Flannae mounted wave after wave of attack.

Sharaferé's eldest son, Darnakurian, could take no more. A peerless enchanter, he called on many sources of power, even across the planes. From corners of the void dark voices came to him, seducing him with the promise of supreme power—power which could destroy the Ur-Flannae and save the city and the forest. Darnakurian grew gaunt and sleepless, barely ceasing his work to memorize more spells he needed in his race against time. Finally, he crafted the appalling sword the elves named Hunger. Marching to the throne room, he presented it in triumph to his mother as the instrument by which the elves could triumph and banish their evil foes.

Sharaferé was appalled. The weapon's evil was apparent to her, hidden beneath the waves of magical power which emanated from it. She ordered him to destroy the malign sword, at which Darnakurian was aghast. Driven half-mad with bitter anger at what was happening to the forest and frustration at the thought that his endless work was valueless in his mother's eyes, he raised the sword and slew her in the Palace of the Heavens. Looking down at her body, the enormity of his crime came over him and the elf-prince was plunged into madness, his mind broken. He fled into the forest and came upon a conclave of necromancers. Then his doom came upon him in earnest.

Darnakurian slew thousands in a matter of hours. The circle of destruction his sword emanated cut a great swathe of horrific deaths before him as he charged the Ur-Flannae and drove them in terror from the forest. Finally, the elf-prince took himself back to the city. So weak was he by now that the sword controlled him utterly, and it drove him to slay his own people in the hundreds. Every gray elf alive in the City of Summer Stars either fled, never to return, or perished in that single day.

## The Sentinels

At the heart of the Coldwood the old City of the Summer Stars has simply disappeared. The magic of the elves has faded, and the city with it. Some say that its ruins can be found within the Fading Grounds, but the portal to it within the Coldwood is unknown. All of the city is gone from Oerth—save Darnakurian's own keep. The elves named this Bitterness, a word with a more intense double meaning than in the Common tongue. It refers both to the dreadful tragedy of the prince, and also to the intensely bitter chill which gives the Coldwood its name. The Coldwood generally has temperatures below zero, but within five miles of Bitterness the temperature is virtually unbearable, all vegetation is frozen into stark, leafless

# The Adri Forest

forms—killed by the black permafrost which covers everything here. Spells such as *control temperature 10' radius* and magical items such as *boots of the north* are powerless to negate this bitter chill, or to protect characters from its effects.

No living man has ever entered Bitterness. Within it, Darnakurian's form is still alive—in some sense. A powerful *temporal stasis* spell, crafted by the last of the great gray elf wizards before they fled the city, imprisons him inside. He still holds Hunger on his lap as he sits frozen, staring out blindly into the great marbled hall of his home.

No living man (or other sentient creature) is going to get anywhere near Bitterness if the guardians who prowl the margins of the Coldwood have their way. These gray elves are known as the Sentinels. There are 20 of them around the Coldwood, each a fighter/mage of great power (20+ levels split between their two classes). They have special magical defenses, with base 80% magic resistance and complete immunity to illusions and disabling spells such as *hold*, *charm*, *domination* and the like. They possess formidable magical items, with many holding *rings of human control* to keep potential intruders at bay. Some of these Sentinels are gray elves from the old city itself, which brings them close to the limit of their years. When a Sentinel grows old, and the time comes for him to pass from the world, another takes his place, usually sent by the Silverbow Sages of Lendore.

The Sentinels warn intruders not to enter the Coldwood, telling them of the dangers. Monsters such as remorhaz and white puddings prowl the intensely cold permafrost area. Elementals, golems formed of ice as hard as steel, and many still more dangerous magical guardians stalk the wood. Great necrophidii (4-10 HD) are the most numerous. The Sentinels invariably know when anyone approaches within a mile of the Coldwood, and they can *teleport* instantly to any point on its margins to ward off such folk. Great owls spy the margins and talk to the Sentinels, but the frozen spider's webs around the Coldwood are also said to be a magical detection system alerting them to visitors.

The Sentinels do not speak of themselves, nor exactly what the Coldwood contains. They say simply that great evil and danger lurk within, and that the magical stasis containing that evil must not be disturbed. They will not permit entry. Their own enchantments make it impossible for any to enter the wood by planar travel, *teleporting* and other magical means. If need be, the Sentinels will fight to prevent any entering. They prefer to use disabling spells such as *charm*, *domination*, *hold*, *wall of force* and their magical rings, but if there is no alternative, they will not hesitate to use lethal attacks by spell, device, or weapon. If a Sentinel is seriously endangered, he will flee using his *teleport* ability. However, in a short time other Sentinels will arrive to join the fray.

## Additional DM Information

Player characters should not be seeking Darnakurian or his appalling sword! This is an intensely evil and very, very powerful artifact. Its powers are not specified here, and have waned a little since Darnakurian first crafted the relic, but it is known still to inflict destruction on any it strikes. Gywdiesin would say this is the least terrifying of its powers; there are fates worse than death, and Hunger can bring them to those to seek it. In addition, any character holding Hunger has his alignment immediately shifted to that of the bastard sword itself (Chaotic Evil) and becomes a pawn of the sword. Not even a *wish* (nor indeed any number of *wishes*) can prevent this, or release a character from the control of the sword. Rather, for adventures which involve the Coldwood and the Sentinels, see the *Whispers and Ventures* chapter for challenges to high-level characters!

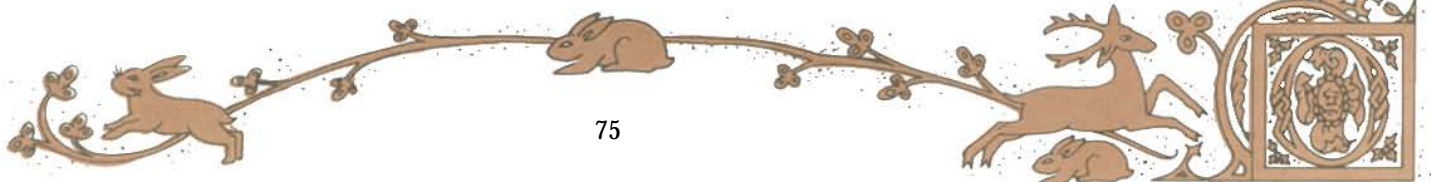
## Innspa and the Hills

### Yellowretch and the Wooded Hills

The forested hills of the Adri are a place of misfortune. Mines excavated in the past suffered flooding, gas explosions, and yielded only subterranean monsters, no ores or minerals. Farmers attracted to the shallow rolling hillsides found that their crops grew poorly and blights despoiled most growing seasons. Livestock often sickened and died from all manner of ailments and agues. The trees of the thin woodlands here were often themselves stunted, yellow-leaved and sickly. Some say the area is cursed. More reasoned souls consider that some mineral or metallic poison contaminates the soil and water table here, though the gases from the mine certainly don't help either (see below). Whichever is true, very few intelligent creatures live either above or below ground.

Conversely, these woodlands abound with monsters. Groups of werewolves and wolfweres contend fiercely for territory, and the howls of their fighting can be heard on many moonlit nights. Burrow-dwelling ghouls and ghosts prowl the area, looking for lost travelers to rend. A small group of spriggans has been seen here, and a mated pair of wyverns of exceptional size (9+9 HD). These monsters are in some ways a blessing, for they cut off humanoids from easy passage south through the hilly forest to Nyronnd.

There is one site of special note, the old gnomish mine Yellowretch (as the gnomes now name it). A handful of rubies as large as a plover's egg were found by gnomes centuries ago, and the miners recklessly dug deeper and deeper in search of more prized items. They found no more of them, but they burrowed into a large cavern with peculiar stone walls which had the appearance of shriv-





# The Adri Forest

elled and yellowed paper. From that cavern, a seemingly endless cloud of yellow, stinking gas rose inexorably upward through the mine and forced the gnomes to abandon it. Periodically, whenever the weather is calm and there are no prevailing winds, this gas creeps out of the old mineworks and rolls down over the hills, affecting an area of up to 10d20 square miles. The gas is nauseating, so that any creature breathing it must make a saving throw versus poison each round it does so. A failed saving throw means that the creature loses 2 points each of Strength and Constitution as long as he stays within the affected area. Undead are not affected by this, and the ghouls and ghosts of the hills often use the opaque yellow cloud (visibility is one-quarter normal range) as cover for ambush and trailing their quarry.

Yellowwretch would be simply a good place to avoid, were it not for the fact that the gnomes definitely detected magic (alteration and evocation/invoke) emanating strongly from the cavern. They would not enter it again now, feeling ashamed that perhaps their forefathers brought the curse down which seems to lie on the hills. Thus, any magical secrets and treasures which Yellowwretch held are probably still within the mines.

## Innspa

Innspa is a unique city in Aerdy. It has been part of Nyrond, Almor, and North Province in its history. For the past 35 years or so, it had become virtually the personal fief of Prince Corazell of the House of Garasteth. His House had bought Innspa from the Crandens centuries ago when the city was but a small mining village and turned it into a trade city, dealing in ores from the Flinty Hills, food from Nyrond, timber from the Adri and fish from the river. During changes of nation, Innspa stayed much the same, a cosmopolitan city where all races and alignments mixed and intermingled.

Corazell died without issue, and while one or two of his male brothers and cousins have turned up to take possession of the city, they have met their match in the fierce Countess Karasin, Corazell's widow. She is cunning and crafty. Since Corazell died in the wars, she says that she holds this city in a form of royal trust in his memory. No mind that Prince Corazell died from a brain hemorrhage brought on by ingesting staggering amounts of brandy. Karasin proclaims him a war hero and will not give up his lands. Indeed, she has proclaimed ownership of a swathe of land stretching from the eastern bank of the small western Harp tributary as far northwards as the point where the river enters the southern Griff Mountains.

Of course, Karasin has little control over these lands. Those to the north are overrun by humanoids. She has a pact of sorts with the Bone March orcs, and proclaims them administrators of the northern lands beyond the

forested hills. She has little choice, but this pact discourages Hastern of Edge Field from setting his covetous eyes in that direction. Her western lands are mostly prowled by disorganized defectors of the Aerdy armies involved in the sack of Almor. Many deserted from that campaign, and many were driven blind, deranged, or forced to run shrieking in fear when fiends bestrode the plains of that land. Remnants of rag-tag armies wander those lands, sometimes crossing the Harp's small tributary to enter northern Almor.

All this leaves Karasin in control of Innspa and just enough surrounding land to keep the 10,500 people of the city from starvation, subsisting on the fish of the Harp and some grain from outlying farms, almost all of which have a garrison of Karasin's troops stationed in their barns. Trade is rare now; the Flinty Hills gnomes and miners have long gone, and little Adri produce flows through Innspa—although from time to time some goods come along the forest trail from Elversford. This trade route might carry more cargo, which would benefit both Innspa and Elversford, if only Karasin would ally with the Adri folk. However, she foolishly lays formal claim to the lands around Elversford and all Adri lands west of the Harp River, so that alliance is stillborn.

Innspa would appear a natural place for some noble intriguer or petty warlord to overrun. There are two good reasons why Karasin holds to power here. First, she is known to be on excellent terms with Prince Strychan of Dustbridge, sharing his black sense of humor and exquisitely debauched pleasures. Strychan is not a man many would oppose. Secondly, Karasin is herself a sinister and dangerous woman.

Karasin's family (minor landholders south of Atirr) has been rumored for centuries to have vampires and necromancers among their number, and to have magics available to them which slow even the appearance of the passage of years. She is known to possess many magical scrying items, some of which can penetrate even powerful magical defenses (such as *amulets of proof against detection and location*, *mind blank* spells, and more). Karasin knows too much about too many powerful people for them to take a chance on having her assassinated and seizing her lands.

So, Karasin remains in control, for the time being. She seeks alliances, however, and her friendship with Strychan reveals her basically opportunistic nature. She allies with whoever she thinks will come out on top. Her own military leaders include the formidable General Levalen, a commander of the army which decimated Almor. He will never forgive Ivid for the pointless destruction of Chathold ("By the Powers, I could have looted millions of gold if that fool of an overking had let me besiege the place!"). And he favors Strychan's claim to the malachite throne. Karasin and Levalen are currently trying to negotiate an alliance between Strychan and

# The Adri Forest

Montand of Delaric, with Karasin hoping to sell the deal to the eastern Garasteth nobles. In this way, Naelax would keep the throne, but Garasteth would benefit as well, perhaps displacing Darmen as the second house of the lands. Needless to say, the House of Darmen is well aware of this, and they have spies and agents within Innspa and even at Karasin's court.

Finally, while Innspa is not a walled city, the old town is walled with the rest of the city built around it. Most houses are built of stone, and many reveal the handiwork of dwarven or gnomish stonemasons—though demihumans are very rare here now. The old town houses about 2,500 people, and contains Karasin's palace, the barracks of Levialen's Innspa Regiment, and the richer, skilled workers and petty aristocracy of the city. Rulership is high within the old town, medium elsewhere. Goods are expensive (cost multiplier 180%) and are often in short supply.

Innspa has two exceptional features. One is the series of stone aqueducts of gnomish design which bring fresh water from the Flinty Hills. The other is the splendidly ornate public baths with their idiosyncratic bill of fare: a quick swim and bathe in the "tepid water" baths costs but 1 cp. For the aristocracy, 2 gp buys a foaming hot water bath with herbal infusions and allegedly medicinal mineral salts together with all the hot towels and soap one can use. They were built in CY 322 by an eccentric wizard obsessed with personal hygiene, and the fire elemental he bound to heat the waters is still at work here.

## Personalities of the Adri Forest

**Immonara, Archdruid of the Adri:** 16th-level priestess of Obad-hai (Dex 15 [16\*], Con 15, Wis 18, Cha 18). AC 1 (leather armor +5, cloak of protection +3, gauntlets of dexterity\*, shield not used), hp 76, AL N. Immonara is nearly 90 years old but, with her resistance to aging, appears to be in her mid-thirties. She has very long blond hair, plaited down her back, and pale blue eyes. At 6' 3", she is an imposing figure, and Flan blood is strong in her.

Immonara works quietly to avoid conflicts between those who seek to protect the forest. She talks with both ranger factions, and makes quiet overtures to Ehlonna's priesthood, often appearing in changed form (using the skill of a 16th-level druid) to take on a form pleasing to those she speaks with. Immonara also takes an interest in events in other great forests; the Celadon, Gamboge, Grandwood, and farther afield. She is pacifistic, hoping for better times to come, and tries to persuade people to use passive resistance to the raiders and marauders from Aerdy.

Immonara has many magical items. Most notably, she owns a *staff of the woodlands* +3, a *ring of spell turning*, and an ornately decorated and polished chunk of oakstone (a

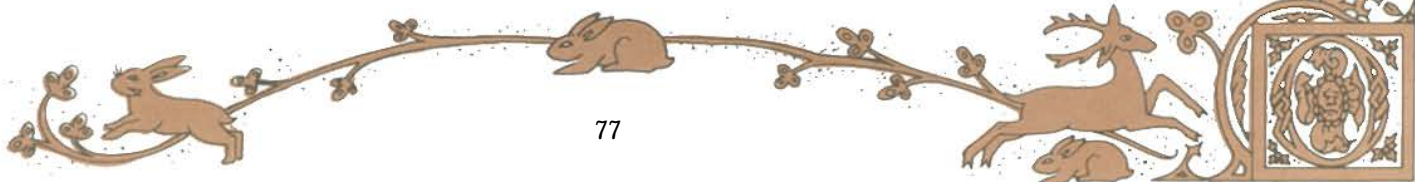
mineral which has the appearance of oak bark), a powerful *stone controlling earth elementals* which always summons an earth elemental of at least 16 HD and has a 50% chance for conjuring an elemental with 20+1d4 HD.

**Karasin, Countess of the House of Garasteth:** 9th-level mage (Con 15, Int 18, Cha 16). AC 6 (ring of protection +4), hp 33, AL NE. Karasin is 47 years old, but even without magical aids she looks a decade younger. She has red-blond hair and deep green eyes, and stands 5' 1" tall. She is self-conscious of her lack of height, so she wears shoes with raised heels and wears her long hair bound into a topknot and circled with a silver tiara. The effect is certainly dramatic; the countess is a fierce and temperamental woman.

Karasin is determined to hold on to her lands and sees herself as a powerbroker within the Great Kingdom. She has no love for Strychan of Dustbridge, but she fantasizes about being his queen. She is confident he is the best human candidate for the malachite throne. But she shudders at the thought of an animus-overking replacing Ivid. Insightful about people and highly observant, Karasin is nonetheless a vicious individual with an especially bleak and cruel sense of humor. Save for General Levialen, who is too smart and powerful to play games with, she specializes in tormenting her advisers and leaving them uncertain of how they truly stand with her. Her more depraved personal tastes are noted in the description of Dustbridge; see the next chapter.

**(General) Levialen:** 13th-level fighter (Str 17, Dex 16, Con 17, Int 17, Cha 15). AC -2 (plate mail +3, shield not used), hp 100, AL LE. Commander of the Innspa Regiment, Levialen is 44 years old. He is not especially powerfully built, but he looks his full 6' 3" in his typical upright, stiff posture. The man always seems to be standing at attention. He has light brown hair and hazel eyes, his left eye partially scarred from a duel. Levialen has a *heavy lance* +3 which he uses to great effect when charging on his massive warhorse (which has *chain barding* +2) and his *bastard sword* +2, *nine lives stealer* (5 life stealings remaining) is an even more powerful weapon since it can create *fear* in all opponents within a 30' radius once a day for 1 turn (saving throw versus wands negates the effect).

Levialen managed to evade a summons to Rauxes, which he is sure would have resulted in him being turned into an animus. Having seen what this revivification has done to other generals, Levialen counts himself lucky. He backs Prince Strychan's claim to the malachite throne, and keeps his troops in a good state of readiness for battle. Still, he preserves their numbers and strength by avoiding skirmishes with the Bone March humanoids prowling the lands northeast of the Flinty Hills. Levialen is not a politician, and he trusts Karasin in such matters. He dislikes her self-indulgent nature, but he has regard for her





# The Adri Forest

shrewd brain and knows she is not famous for backing losers.

**Lisara Elmhern:** 10th-level priestess of Ehlonna (Dex 15, Wis 16, Cha 17). AC 1 (*elven chain mail* +3, shield not used), hp 42, AL CG. Lisara is 30 years old, 5' 6", with dark brown hair and mismatched eyes; her left eye is emerald green, the right is hazel-brown. She owns a *longsword* +3 and a *longbow* +2 with a quiver of 18 *sheaf arrows* +1. Her chaotic nature is best reflected in her occasional tempers. She doesn't often lose her temper, but when she does the effect is pyrotechnic.

Lisara is rather torn between affiliations. She favors aggressive defense of the Adri, sniffing out planned invasions and heading them off. However, this is a view shared by Parren (who is lawful) but not by Prisstyne (who is chaotic) among the rangers whom Lisara regards as her best allies. She tries hard to persuade Prisstyne to be more forceful and aggressive, without great success. On the other hand, she chafes at the militaristic organization in and around Elversford. She prefers to prowling border areas with junior priests and a handful of rangers and foresters with superior fighting talents who form the backbone of the Warriors of the Huntress (Ehlonna being, of course, the Huntress-Power).

**Lukan the Boar:** 10th-level bard (Str 19, Con 16, Int 15, Cha 17). AC -1 (*chain mail* +5, *boots of striding and springing*, shield not used), hp 69, AL NG. The 37-year old Lukan is huge; 6' 4", 285 lbs., and he looks like a crazed barbarian. Red-brown hair seems to grow all over him; he has a huge bushy beard, a mane of head hair, and thick, almost furry body hair. Lukan's natural Strength rating is 18, but he possesses a magical ring which adds +1 to Strength and which also has the combined properties of a *ring of jumping* and a *ring of the ram*. One of Lukan's best-rehearsed combat maneuvers involves using the jumping function to crash into an opponent, attacking him with his *longsword* +3 and the ramming attack, and then leaping back with his magical boots before his enemy has a chance of replying.

Lukan has a huge enjoyment of life. He eats like a horse, and his capacity for ale is legendary. He is especially proud of the rounded belly he has acquired from pouring endless gallons of it down his throat, and likes to sit by the fire with his hands crossed over his stomach, patting it contentedly from time to time. He's vain, of course, and he has an eye for a fine silk shirt or blouson. If he has any lapse of aesthetic sense, it is that one with a stomach so large should not really wear leather britches quite so tight-fitting.

Lukan is a warrior-bard. He doesn't sing romantic ballads or lament the tragedy of the human condition. His superb baritone voice is used to declaim stirring epic tales of might, valor and the triumphs of the good and

great. Likewise, Lukan doesn't use magic for show. He uses *ice storms*, *lightning bolts*, *fireballs*, and *magic missiles* (though he will not use spells within the forest which might harm it, especially fire-based spells). So far as the history of magical or special items is concerned, Lukan has only half the normal chance to know something of such items if they are not directly combat-related (25% chance). But he has a 75% chance for knowing something if the item is a weapon or combat-related (such as a specially crafted *wand of lightning*).

Lukan might thus be expected to be amongst an army, but he loves the Adri and its people, and he is happy at Elversford given Parras's building of its defenses and militias. Lukan also travels to outlying villages and hamlets, steeling the morale and resolve of folk with his singing and powerful poetic recitations. He knows the forest as well as any ranger, and most people like, trust, and value this larger-than-life character.

**Parren Ludern:** 12th-level ranger (Str 16, Dex 16, Con 16, Wis 16, Cha 15). AC 3 (*leather armor* +3, *cloak of protection* +2, shield not used), hp 80, AL LG. Parren fights two-handed with a *longsword* +3 and a *dagger* +4. and uses his *composite longbow* +2 when necessary. He is 5' 11", wiry and slim, with dark brown hair and gray eyes. He looks slightly older than his 31 years; his skin is weathered and he has crow's feet around his eyes. Parren owns a prized three-person *carpet of flying*. His own followers include a nosy and friendly black bear, Hector, the pixie Shillifandi, who spies around Elversford, four human fighters (levels 2, 3, 4, 5) and two human rangers (of 3rd and 4th level). Elversford is his stronghold.

Parren is a decent man who seeks alliance with Nyron and any other LG or NG allies. However, he dislikes and distrusts people of chaotic alignments, though Lisara is broadly an ally. He trains the forester militia in camouflage and ambushes, and drills the burgeoning ranks of Elversford's defenders. He is especially proud of the bowmen there, whom he trains individually.

**Prisstyne Carnhuis:** 11th-level ranger (Dex 17, Con 16, Wis 16, Cha 17). AC 1 (*leather armor* +2, *cloak of displacement*, shield not used), hp 77, AL CG. Prisstyne fights with her *spear* +3, +6 vs. *Lawful Evil creatures*, and she has three *daggers of throwing* and a *short bow* +4 for ranged attacks. Prisstyne is 29, 6', willowy to the point of thinness. Her light brown hair is cropped short on top and at the sides, and she has a long, lustrous pony tail. Prisstyne's bright green eyes are almost startling at first sight, as are her hands—very large for a woman, with long fingers and almond-shaped nails.

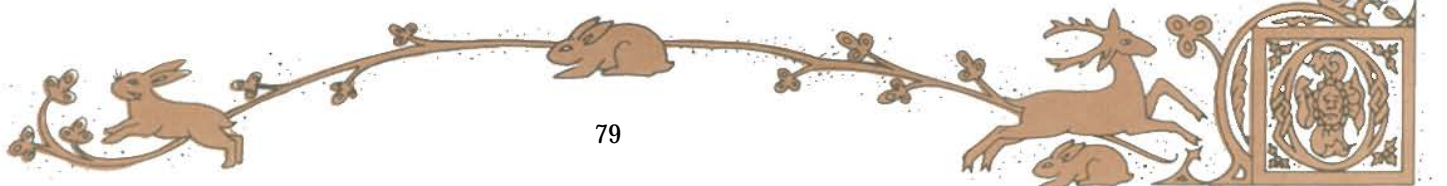
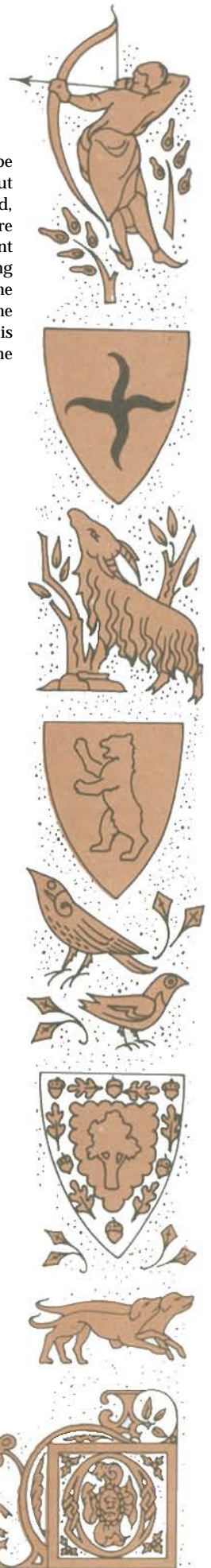
Prisstyne wears *rings of free action* and *sustenance*, and also boots of the north. She has a small tree house lair hidden deep in the forest, and some of her followers will usually guard this. She regards her followers as compan-

## The Adri Forest

ions, and they are free to come and go as they wish, though they are deeply loyal to her. Two human male rangers (levels 2, 5) maintain the tree houses, and two brownies (brothers who are constantly arguing with each other) prowl the forest. Prisstyne's huge wolf Harquan (5+5 HD, 45 hp) usually accompanies her on her roaming. Finally, a seclusive young wood elf priest (4th level) of Rillifane Rallathil is an exceptional member of her entourage, a very rare exile from the wood elf homelands. He is young, shy, and speaks little to anyone other than Prisstyne.

Pristyne has faith that the factions beyond the Adri

will tear themselves apart, and the forest people will be left to go their own way. She fights when she must, but she doesn't look for trouble and she fears that organized, aggressive action by the forest folk will create more problems than it will solve. She is fiercely independent and respects the free will of all sentient creatures. Among her followers is a pegasus who offered service, but she did not wish to see such a creature tied to her circle. The pegasus visits periodically to see if Prisstyne needs his help, and sometimes she soars on his back above the forest to spy on movements beyond her forest home.







# The Naelax Lands

Pop.: 700,000 + 8,000 humanoids (approx.)  
Capital: None (largest city is Delaric, pop. 20,500)  
Ruler: No single ruler (Naelax Princes)  
Rulership: Variable, generally Medium to High  
Cost Multiplier: 120%

## Ivid's Princelings

The three areas of land shown as the Naelax lands are almost all owned and controlled by nobles of the House of Naelax. The northernmost lands of the three fiefdoms are mostly owned by Prince Montand of Delaric and his liegemen. The central wedge of lands is in the grip of Prince Strychan of Dustbridge. And the southern lands are a diversely controlled set of landholdings.

In all these lands, there is nominal acceptance of Ivid as overking. Taxes and tithes are still paid to Rauxes, and Ivid's armies still prowl these lands and are afforded hospitality. However, the Naelax nobility has no doubt that Ivid's days are done, and power struggles dominate these lands. Some are petty squabbles, old scores settled with mercenaries. But there is a major tension between the rulers of Delaric and Dustbridge.

Prince Strychan of Dustbridge is an ambitious, charismatic man who is increasingly accepted as the most plausible candidate the House of Naelax can put forward for the malachite throne—since Ivid's own sons are mad, feeble-minded, or worse, and no one wants one of his descendants on the throne anyway. However, Prince Strychan's ambition is a little too naked for the tastes of Montand of Delaric, who also has a puritanical dislike of Strychan's debauched and eccentric court. Karasin of Innspa, Strychan's paramour, works hard behind the scenes to swing Montand's influence and power behind the Prince of Dustbridge, but Montand has not yet acceded. He has his own worries with Rinloru and its undead armies to the east, and much of his diplomatic energies are devoted to careful dealings with North Province.

Both these princes managed to avoid the fate of becoming an animus. Strychan always managed to be away on some plausible pretext when Ivid's summons came, while Montand simply refused to budge from his fortress. This is another reason why Montand fears allying with Strychan. He knows that Ivid is especially angry with him for his refusal to leave his city and lead the token army he gave to the overking during the Greyhawk Wars. And he considers that an alliance might bring down the wrath of the overking's armies upon him. Delaric is a well-fortified city, but even so this is a conflict Montand wants to stay well out of. The problem of the renegade priest Krennden of Hextor exacerbates this, of course.

In these lands mercenaries find good employ. Many old scores are being settled, as noted, and some of Strychan's liegemen in particular are jockeying for position behind

their lord and use ambush, assassination, and sabotage to deal with their rivals. In the southern lands there are only pockets of effective control, and mercenaries and humanoid troops (many deserters from Rauxes) prowl the highways and raid farmsteads in search of gold, food, clothing, and equipment. Travelers here will need plenty of weapons and very fast horses.

## Locations and Settlements

### The Northern Lands

#### Delaric

As its position at the heart of a central network of *dirawaen* roads shows, Delaric is a major trade center linking north with south, east with west. Heavily fortified, with three-meter thick city walls and a massive fortress keep occupied by Montand and his troops (including the exceptional heavy cavalry of the city), the city is wealthy and still. Rulership level here is high.

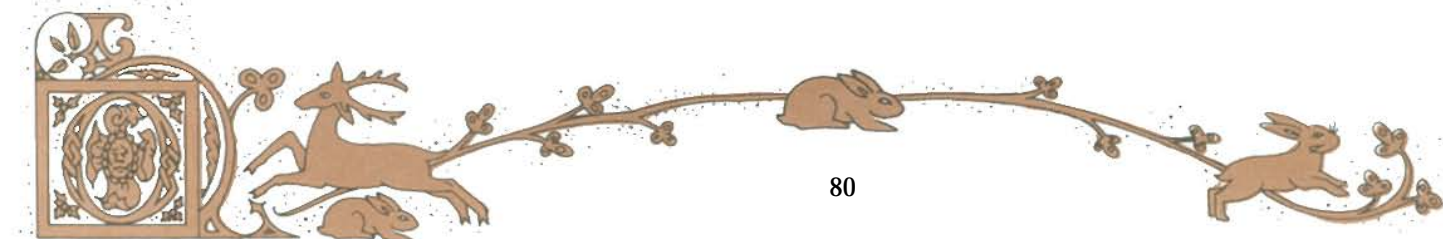
Delaric is famed for its artisans; engineers, architects, fine furniture makers, and the like. The people of the city are very practical. They know the price of everything. The city's university has a reputation for practicality and pragmatism—not the arcane arts.

The mages' guild includes in its training courses how to use spells for commercial purposes, helping in city building, agriculture, and the like. Delaric's mages are not of great power or reputé, but they are not absent-minded or eccentric. And they are certainly not poor.

Not surprisingly, the priesthood of Zilchus is strong in this city. This gives Montand some cause for anxiety, since he is aware that this priesthood generally favors the House of Darmen for the malachite throne. While Montand himself has no ambitions for the throne, he is loyal to his own house and has received assurances from the wily patriarch of the city, Hearnden, that the priesthood will not be "politically" active here.

Against this backdrop of wealth, no little elegance, and pragmatism, Delaric's other claim to fame is its superb Bardic Colosseum. Bards of Delaric are welcome throughout the Aerdy lands; they are renowned for their skill with poetry and declamation. The bardic college makes much of teaching bards genealogy and history, so that their command of epic historical lays and verse is unparalleled.

The most famous—or infamous—of the city's bards is undoubtedly Nightsong, a sinister but commanding presence at Montand's court. It is said that even Montand is somewhat afraid of the bard, whose power over his audiences is well-attested. Nightsong makes a habit of challenging guests with his recitations, and his innate evil is very clear from the relish with which he can skewer unfortunate victims of his displeasure with sarcastic



# The Naelax Lands

barbs and veiled insults.

Montand rules his city with a harsh grip. Penalties for crime are generally harsh, and one oddity of the city's laws is the category of "cultural crime." Much as statutes against blaspheming deities are part of the laws, so are statutes against defaming or portraying in an irreverent light the cultural attainments of the city—and especially its bards. These laws are almost unworkable, but are wheeled out every now and then to deal with troublesome people who Montand wishes to have placed in exile from Delaric without appearing to be arbitrary about matters.

Among the city's residents, a notable recent arrival is Krennden, the renegade priest of Hextor who has denounced Ivid and set himself up in opposition to the patriarch-general in Rauxes. Krennden is rapidly whipping up converts to his cause, which is basically that of an (un)holy war to drive out an insane heretic and restore the proper pride of armies to the lands of Aerdy. Why Montand allows this troublesome priest to continue with his public rantings, given that this is a virtual invitation to Ivid to strike hard against him, is very unclear. Some say Krennden must have some hold, magical or blackmail, over the prince to be allowed the freedom he has in the city. A recent assassination attempt against him by priests loyal to the patriarch-general gained Krennden sympathy and kudos, and he has now effectively taken over the temple of Hextor within the city. Some of Montand's troops clearly chafe at the bit under the priest's urgings, and openly express their desire to ride on Rauxes and install their prince as overking, a prospect Montand has no taste for. Of course, if he allied with some other princes then a combined army could make that fateful ride, which would deal with the problem—one way or another.

## Rikerstone

Ancestral home of Countess Ishell, this small tower-keep complex stands watch over the southern territories of Edge Field. Ishell is a wily, cunning woman who encourages Montand to caution and continually begs extra aid for her isolated fortification. Wary of Nightsong's home to the north (the similarity of name comes from the fact that they were once twinned fortifications owned by the same prince), Ishell keeps visitors at bay if possible. She is very knowledgeable about political matters, and if her vanity is appealed to, she might be more forthcoming about them than most.

## Rimzenstone

Rimzenstone is the ancestral home of Nightsong, Montand's court bard. It has a strong Gothic streak to its architecture, with leering gargoyles and ornately decorated archways and small courtyards within its

walls. The walled, fortified mansion house is populated by servants who Nightsong selects, seemingly, for their ugliness. Rarely can one household ever have held so many grotesques within its walls. Its sinister appearance is not just surface deep. Nightsong is an accomplished magician, and his dungeons contain deadly traps and devices. It is rumored that Nightsong is an adept kidnapper, concealing his victims within the walls of his rank dungeons and holding them for ransom; he specializes in noble and wealthy adventurers. This may just be rumor, for those returned by their anonymous kidnapper refuse to speak of him, and cannot be magically compelled to do so. They appear not to have been ill-treated, and some speak reluctantly of sipping fine wine and sweetmeats with their charismatic, masked captor, even coming to like and admire him. They may also be amnesic for points of detail, making it harder to be sure whether Nightsong truly was their abductor.

A half-mile south of the mansion is a fortified garrison holding a hundred or so of Montand's troops. Ostensibly they are placed here to watch over the northern portions of Strychan's lands, and guard the riverway to Loutharn. But equally Montand wants to keep tabs on his bard during his absences from his court. A specialist diviner is usually posted with these troops, giving further plausibility to this alternative explanation.

## The Shuttleford Villages

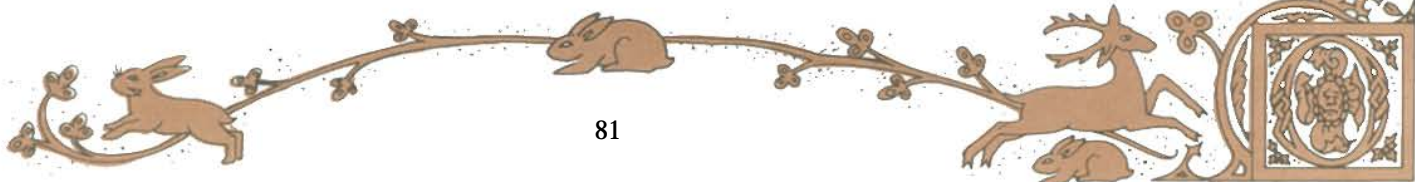
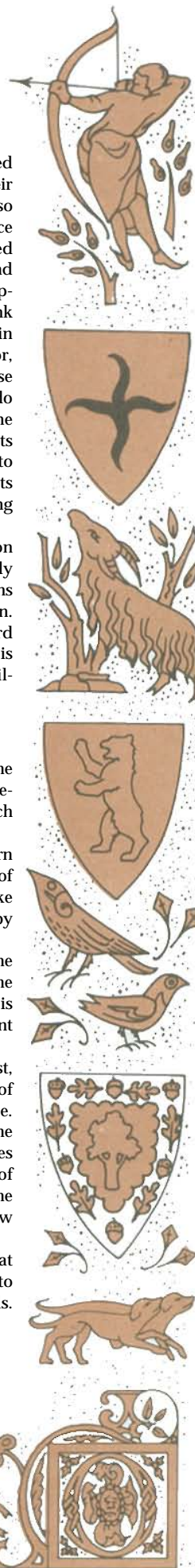
Among the many small villages and hamlets along the lengthy, winding Flanmi River, High and Low Shuttleford are the largest, with some 1,200 or so folk in each village.

They flourished in the past as folk headed for Loutharn for the markets of the Wind Fair during the first week of Harvester, and coaching inns and taverns sprouted like weeds here. Now, however, the villages are avoided by most. There are two reasons for this.

The first reason is the innate unpleasantness of the people. They seem to revel in clutter and filth; the contents of chamber pots are dumped wherever is convenient, and many people here suffer unpleasant diseases as a result.

Shuttleforders are dishonest, vicious folk. In the past, the landowner of the two villages, Prince Kobasten of Naelax, held this in check by virtual military rule. However, he fell foul of Ivid's priests. Now an animus, he has fled the lands, and his fate is unknown. The villages thus exist in a state of virtual anarchy, since none of Kobasten's relatives dares to assume control less the unpredictable animus-prince should return and show displeasure at another assuming his place.

The second reason for shunning these villages is that they have come, by virtue of their lack of rulership, to attract evil and vicious exiles from many Aerdi lands.





# The Naelax Lands

Thus, the village herbalist may well turn out to be a disguised priest of Incabulos who will sell the innocent purchaser poison with a toothless grin. The butcher will have fresh meat as well as maggoty hunks for the poor, but one should not enquire too closely which type of creature the meat came from.

The architecture of the villages, with crowded slum cottages and narrow, dark alleyways, adds to the crime and violence of the people. Throats are cut not just for a few copper coins here, but in a fit of rage that an ambushed victim has nothing of value to yield up to his assailant. These are places to avoid (which is an invitation to the DM to force PCs to seek someone hiding in one or the other village).

## The Central Lands

### Dustbridge

Dustbridge is a town of 2,200 people. The main feature is the huge walled castle of Prince Strychan. The town itself lies in the middle of some surprisingly fertile arable land, away from the great river basin of the Flanmi. Good supplies of grains, fruits and livestock still make their way to the town. Strychan's troops patrol the outlying farmsteads regularly and deal summarily with any raiders or bandits. Word has got around among the mercenaries and desperadoes of Aerdi that these are good lands to avoid, for if one is captured one may end up as an exhibit in one of Strychan's entertainments. That is a fate, with its accompanying humiliations, which even a hardened bandit will blanche at.

Dustbridge is a paradox. It appears to be a well-controlled small town of moderate wealth, with reasonably happy and contented people. Under the surface, however, matters are different. Many of the wealthier merchants try to ape Strychan's lavish entertainments with repulsive parties and amusements of their own, while even the poorer folk—filled with tales and lurid rumors of the debauch at the castle—indulge in repellent night-time activities of their own devisings. Animal fighting is the least unpleasant of these. Unlike Eastfair, there is a manic and violent edge to this debauchery, and visitors here are significantly more likely to end up as victims than witnesses of leisure activities.

Strychan appears often before the townsfolk, granting Brewfest coppers to the poor and strutting about town in outfits of lace, leather, and silk. He deliberately appears as a foppish dandy, but everyone knows that while he may appear supercilious, indeed effeminate, the prince is a man of unsurpassed cruelty. He has eliminated every independently-minded priest from his city, either by imprisonment on trumped-up charges or at the hands of his elite assassins, and he has complete control over the mercantile and artisan guilds of Dustbridge. Their senior guild members have often become dependent on the

herbal substances Strychan serves his guests to enhance their enjoyment of his debauches, and Strychan has a monopoly on supply. Strychan is a prince to rival Ivid himself for his wiles and implacable evil.

Strychan makes no public show of his desire for the malachite throne, nor does he disavow it. In conversations with important guests and visitors, he expresses the view that Ivid is clearly insane and that Aerdi should be reborn as a federal state with a senate of major landholding princes. This is just to reassure other nobles, of course. Strychan seeks dominion as absolute as that of the long line of Ivids he seeks to supplant.

Strychan is a complex individual. Brilliantly intelligent and a superb tactician, he nonetheless has an irrepressible chaotic streak which he has managed to disassociate within his own personality. Dealing with affairs of the city, or in political discussions, he is cool, sharp, and very self-controlled.

However, at his entertainments, the monster shows his true colors. He is a connoisseur of tortures, possessing an unequalled collection of suitable instruments, and his tastes run to the bizarre: one of his masquerades included a cast of slaves and captives who had their tongues extracted to prevent them speaking and were then encased in the skins of great cats. The wretched victims were stitched inside the suits, their hands held within the paws by tarred bandages so that they were unable to get out of them. The application of hot peppered oils shortly before the final stitching ensured that the poor wretches went berserk with pain. And the appearance of a snarling and shrieking assembly of lions and tigers (as it appeared) proved a suitably dramatic conclusion to one of Strychan's evening gatherings. Seated atop his gilt throne, with a *wall of force* preventing the "animals" from reaching him, Strychan watched the ensuing chaos among his guests with glee.

Such amusements are only self-indulgence, of course. Strychan is a powerful mage. Rumors of his trafficking with fiends are certainly not groundless. Strychan is biding his time, knowing others will come to him for favors as his role as pretender to the malachite throne gains wider acceptance. Of course, his spies and assassins let him know who is a potential ally. And they are well capable of eliminating any serious opposition.

Strychan also boxes clever in the matter of humanoid troops. He does not maintain such armies himself and feigns a distaste for them, which boosts his general popularity. However, he does not worry about his liegemen using such mercenaries, which they employ quite commonly. The orcs are mostly of Adri origins, and are usually employed to fight in internecine squabbles, though some still raid the eastern margins of their forest home. The orcs are unusually cruel even by orkish standards, and the commonfolk are especially terrified of them.

# The Naelax Lands

## Loutharn

Loutharn is a major stopover point for river traffic headed along the Flanmi, with its great Harvester Fair still a major attraction during the first week of that month. The village proper, usually referred to as "Old Loutharn" by locals, comprises 1,200 people. But Loutharn has spread out along the western Flanmi banks rather like a strip-town built along a major highway. Ruled by Strychan's eldest son Rivandren, the town is a den of wily thieves.

Loutharn is the best place in all the Flanaess to come if one wishes to be the victim of a scam of some kind. It appears that the entire old village is filled with historical sights; a taverner may explain his exorbitant charges by telling the traveler that he is sleeping in the very bed which Ivid himself (or Grenell, or Strychan, etc.) slept in a year before to the very day. Firewood bundles are sold at ridiculous prices to the innocent visitor, because one faggot in the bundle was taken, somehow unburned, from the pyre of a heretical fiend-worshipping mage burned for his crimes just the week before. Loutharners have an infinite number of ways of separating fools from their gold.

However, there is a nastier edge to Loutharn since Rivandren took up residence. The son is too like the father, too wantonly cruel. But he lacks his father's charisma and his household troops, who act as the town watch now. They are drunken, boorish and vicious. Nearly half are orcs and half-orcs, making them deeply hated by the human population. Taxes and rents here are very high, and evictions of village folk from their homes are becoming commonplace. Public floggings and burnings are almost regular events, and the place has a tense, fearful air to it.

## Tabask

The oddly-named Tabask, a keep and small hamlet of some 250 farming folk, is home to an ebullient and colorful Yatils dwarf with a highly suspicious name. Molvard is certainly the first name the dwarf was given, but the second name of Mohsin is hardly dwarven. Eccentric the master of Tabask certainly is, since he acts the part of a Tusmit exile to the full. It is not just an act, either. Molvard has a fine stock of Tusmit costumes, goods and equipment and regularly supplies Strychan with exotics for his entertainments. So taken was Strychan with the odd little fellow that he gave him this hamlet to administer in return for some free supplies every year, and Molvard delights in the role of the squire of the manor, even in a place so small.

Molvard himself entertains visitors in a glass aviary, magically heated with semi-tropical plants flourishing inside it, with multi-colored birds chirping and swooping around the startled guests. Unsuspecting visitors should beware the long-beaked torkan birds, which have a

gleeful habit of nipping at earlobes.

Molvard certainly has a mysterious and eventful past. He very rarely shows the ability uninvited, but the dwarf can transform his arms and hands to the texture and weight of stone seemingly at will, the skin changing color to gray and feeling cold and hard to the touch. Molvard can slam his fists into stone when they are in this transformed state without ill-effects, a dramatic party trick which has amused Strychan's guests more than once. How he acquired this clearly potent magical ability he will not say, nor does he discuss his past. However, he is fairly knowledgeable about the area around Mordenkainen's home in the Yatils, though he keeps this to himself, and some connection between them is whispered among the knowledgeable.

## The Southern Lands

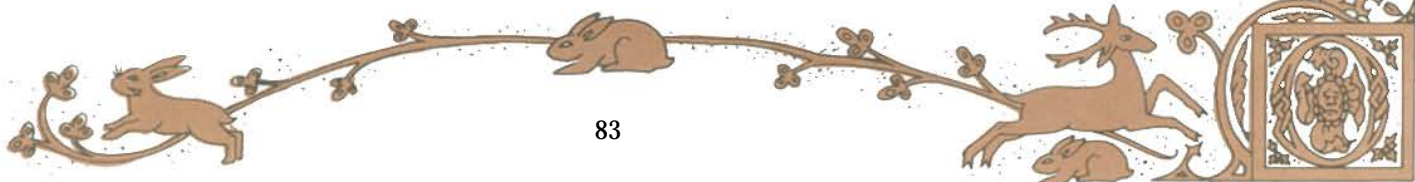
Lacking any single powerful ruler such as Montand or Strychan, the southern Naelax lands are a hodge-podge of small landholdings and feuding minor nobility. Armies may charge high fees for allowing anyone to cross the lands of their petty lord. So trade has declined sharply away from the Flanmi in particular where the militias and well-trained river excisemen of Carnifand and Roqborough protect merchants from over-zealous private militias. However, while there is no central focus of power, there is no shortage of intriguing places and people.

## Carnifand

No one is entirely sure how the very, very fat mage Oswalden got the money to buy this town from its previous owner 15 years ago, but the local population doesn't really care. They changed their cruel and vicious Naelax ruler for an amiable and reasonable ruler, although there is no little corruption here and the legal system has an interesting variation. Punishments for crimes are meted out as a function of one's social class.

Peasants and the poor gain harsher penalties for crimes than merchants or rich folk, though this does not apply to major crimes (murder, arson, etc.) Being upper-class does not give anyone the right to violate laws with impunity.

The twist is that it is effectively possible to buy class. In the most notable instance, "Emeritus Members" of guilds are regarded as upper class for the purposes of the legal system. It costs 150 gp per year to be such an Emeritus Member. With the revenues so collected, Oswalden has been able to keep taxes and tithes low, and as a result the poor have a very strong incentive to be law-abiding. Carnifand has the lowest rate of crimes in all of Aerdi for this very reason (excepting the backhanders, corruption and bribery which are endemic among the middle and upper classes). It also has no humanoid militias, and has a sprinkling of dwarves and halflings within it.





# The Naelax Lands

Oswalden is said to be a distant cousin of Otto, and certainly his great girth lends credence to that claim. The mage enjoys administering the bustling town, and he likes the fact that his subjects think very well of him. Anyone marching on Carnifand would find the whole town turning out as a militia. Oswalden and his town militia-police are also exceptionally good at sniffing out truly evil and trouble-making individuals and getting them out of town before the dust has shaken off their boots. In a dangerous and violent land, Carnifand is an oasis of seeming stability and sanity. Many of the more reputable mercenaries of Aerdi (that is, those who will not take their employer's money and cut his throat for the sheer heck of it) send emissaries here, seeking employ. As a result, no few princes have their own hirers ensconced in taverns around the city. In the heart of Aerdy, this is the place to come if one seeks mercenary employment from a reasonable master.

## Dastryth and Errantkeep

These twin landholdings are held by brothers, Darrien of Dastryth and Marinn of Errantkeep. The brothers are both animuses, despite their lowly status in the hierarchy of the House of Naelax. Each owns a small walled castle, with a village of some 1,000 built around it. In both cases, the townspeople have all been slain and animated as zombies. The brothers are wholly deranged, and their lifelong rivalry has degenerated into an open blood feud. Their undead armies skirmish constantly in the lands between the settlements, though the brothers themselves do not take to the field, staying in their castles.

All this, and the deserted lands around (since virtually all farmers and their kin have fled), would be of little interest save for the fact that each brother has something of real interest in his castle. Darrien owns a *manual of golems* and has two stone golem guards at his castle gates; this work is of Old Suloise date, very ancient indeed, and its final pages, if read, conjur into the mind of the reader apocalyptic events from far-distant Suel history. In Carnifand, it is rumored that spies of the Scarlet Brotherhood came seeking this work, but were foiled by the golems and Darrien himself. Why they should be so interested in it is unknown.

Likewise, Marinn owns a unique tome which gives some details of Tenser's castle and the many designs, traps, and servants it contains. How he came into possession of it is unknown. Marinn is too crazed to realize its value, and at the present time no one knows that he owns it. However, Mordenkainen and others are seeking this book, and when they learn who has it, they will surely take steps to acquire it—with or without Marinn's agreement.

## Permanence

Permanence is as striking a sight as anywhere within Aerdy. The five-towered castle is built atop a great, 50-foot high slab of red rock which has no relation to the surrounding geology of the land. Even looking at the castle is painful; the spired towers seem crooked, the spiral stairways running around them seem to follow impossible angles, bends, and turns. The castle almost seems to be a huge stone clawed hand reaching for the skies, or searching for something to crush in its grip. *Detect magic* reveals the place to be crackling with unidentifiable sorcery.

The castle is home to Kalreth, an animus-warrior wholly loyal to Ivid. His household troops are but 200 in number, and they include 20 fiend-knights. Their power is wholly disproportionate to their number, not least due to the many magical items they possess. Should this force be dispatched to strike against someone or some place at Ivid's behest, they would be devastating.

That they do not do so is because of Kalreth's adjutant, Balraize. A powerful warrior himself, Balraize hopes to depose Kalreth and lead the army here himself. He always alters summons delivered from Rauxes to avoid major military actions. Balraize tells Kalreth that Ivid's orders are to secure Permanence as a place of retreat should Rauxes fall, with the option to ride to Rauxes should the need arise. This is a plausible enough story, so Balraize has gotten away with his dangerous game so far.

Further, Balraize is in the pay of both Strychan and Montand as a spy. Both those princes fear the power of Permanence and its elite strike force and want to know what is happening here (and in Strychan's case, to somehow neutralize it should he march on Rauxes). Both is unaware Balraize is a double agent, of course.

Further, Permanence's magic verges on the awesome. Within the deepest of the dungeons burrowed down into the rock is a chamber containing magical *banestones* which can cast *permanency* spells if used by a wizard of 14th or higher level. This allows the crafting of magical items of power, of course, without the risk of the Constitution drain which casting this spell normally entails. For this reason, many mages of Oerth have a distinct interest in the place. There are three reasons why none has entered it for many years.

First, Kalreth will not tolerate the presence of any wizard within his walls. One of his personality quirks as an animus is a paranoid hatred of wizards, a generalized and amplified obsession developed from his personal antagonism to Karoolck (who is the main reason why Kalreth retreated here from Rauxes). Second, every wizard who covets Permanence's magic does not dare to try to capture it, for fear that other wizards would strike against him. And finally, Kalreth owns a magical artifact of such power that most wizards would rather face a

# The Naelax Lands

rampaging tarrasque than challenge the lord of the castle here.

The spear of sorrow is a barbed, fauchard-like weapon, some seven feet in length, made entirely of black stone. Its exact origins are uncertain, but some say that it was crafted in the Cauldron of Night from whence the malachite throne itself came. Karoolck gave it to Kalreth in the hope of warping him to his own will, given the magical control powers of the malign thing. But Kalreth was not overcome by it or its curse. He was, however, aware of the potential of the spear and realized what a poisoned gift Karoolck had given him.

If Karoolck had not shortly taken up his role as Ivid's favored wizard, Kalreth would have slain him. Details of the spear are given in Kalreth's character profile below.

Permanence can be a major goal for a high-level adventuring group. It is rumored that *permanency* spells are not the only innate magic of the castle, and trying to capture the stronghold would be an immense task for high-level PCs. Even trying to subvert or decoy its defenses would be very difficult. But the magical rewards here could be very great.

## Roqborough

Of the many animuses created by Ivid's servitors, Prince Kalord of Roqborough is certainly the most pyrotechnic. The animus-prince ruler of this otherwise insignificant trade village has an additional ability to those of most animuses. He can literally burst into flame when angered or irritable. His body becomes shrouded in a aura which acts as a *wall of fire* (inflicting 4d6 hp damage to those within five feet of him).

Because Kalord cannot control this ability voluntarily, he wears only a leather suit which has the magical quality of *fire resistance*, so he wanders his own halls, and the village, half-naked most of the time.

Kalord's other claim to fame is that he possesses the signet ring of Ivid II, lost when that monarch's son assassinated his father. The simple garnet-set ring is an heirloom which has symbolic significance; any pretender to the malachite throne would gain some legitimacy to his claim if he were able to mark his own proclamations of rulership with this ring. Kalord is well aware of its value, and has it very carefully hidden within his mansion in the village.

Emissaries from more than one prince have come, offering much gold for it, but as yet Kalord has dismissed them all. How long he can continue to do so without someone marching on his village to take it by force is uncertain. Still, the distance between Roqborough and the home armies of the main power-player Naelax Princes is quite considerable, and such a strategy would not be likely to be successful. Kalord anticipates that assassins may be sent instead, and he has his own phalanx of

warriors and thieves who act as bodyguards at all times. To date, only three of his guards have been immolated while on duty.

## Personalities of the Naelax Lands

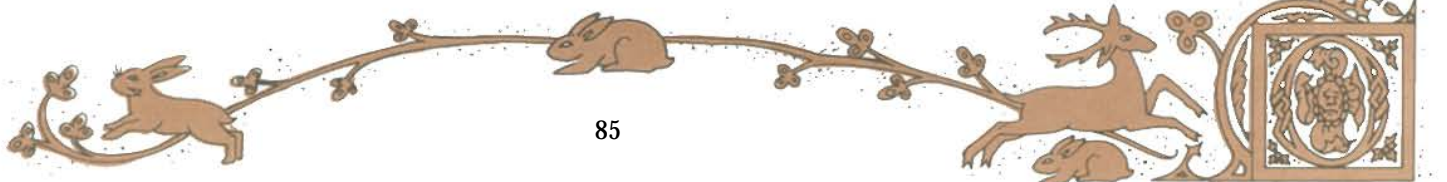
**(General) Kalreth:** Animus with abilities of 15th-level fighter (Str 18/00, Dex 17). AC -7, hp 100, AL NE. Kalreth is only 5' 9" tall, but he is massively muscled and powerful of stature. His brown curly hair is cut short, and he has a very lined forehead above the thick, bushy eyebrows which dominate his face. Kalreth is a general of the Companion Guard, and he hunted down Osson in Medegia and razed much of that land. He regards anything other than complete fealty to Ivid as treason, and he is uncompromising and brutal.

Kalreth's character has been changed irrevocably by his ownership of the spear of sorrow. This artifact has the following magical properties: confers a base AC of -4 (to which no magical bonuses can be added), immunity to cold-based attacks and illusion/phantasm spells below 5th level, regeneration of 1 hp per round during combat, and the ability to use the following powers once a day each at 18th level of magic use: *cone of cold*, *ice storm*, *Otiluke's freezing sphere*, *sink*. The artifact is NE-aligned and only can be used by a warrior of that alignment of 13th or higher level.

The spear is a malign and purposive artifact. It will attempt to control any new user up to three times; in game terms, the user must roll 10d10 below the total of his level + Wisdom + Constitution to resist control. If this roll is made three times, however, the spear does not attempt control again. However, it has powers of mental insinuation, tormenting its owner with nightmares of fiends, destructions, and fates worse than death in stark and barren lands and dungeons of torment the dreamer cannot place. It is a cursed weapon, of course, but only a priest or wizard of 18th or higher level can free the owner from the spear's effects.

The special purpose of the spear, which may lie dormant for many years, is to locate and revivify temples and sleeping guardians devoted to the god Tharizdun. In campaign play, it might become an onerous task to prevent the spear from locating any such places or beings, or to destroy the weapon (which will be formidably difficult).

**Krennden:** 12th-level priest of Hextor (Str 17, Con 16, Wis 16, Cha 17). AC 2 (*chain mail* +3, shield not used), hp 70, AL LE (NE). Krennden is surprisingly youthful-looking, fresh-faced and clear-eyed; he could pass for much younger than his 38 years. He is elegantly tall at 6' 2", of medium build, with pleasing mannerisms and an agreeable smile. Auburn-haired and green-eyed, Krennden can be charming and sociable when he wishes.





# The Naelax Lands

However, he is fired with the faith of the true evil zealot. Krennden knows that Ivid's days are done, and he despises the weakness of the patriarch-general for not seizing effective control of Rauxes from Karoolck. Krennden thus plays a double role as an exile. First, he is drawing to himself as many clergy of Hextor as possible to aid an overthrow of Ivid and the patriarch-general. Second, he works behind the scenes to test who is the best man to replace Ivid. Originally, he had considered Montand his best bet, but increasingly he comes to think that Strychan is the stronger and better candidate. He has had two recent clandestine meetings with Karasin of Innspa, and Krennden is now working to recruit priests, mercenaries, and the armies of minor nobility as far afield as the southern reaches of North Province.

Krennden's dangerousness lies in his combination of good tactics and organization, and his high Charisma. He would make an excellent charismatic priest-demagogue adjutant for an army marching on Rauxes, and he knows it.

**Montand, Prince of the House of Naelax:** 13th-level fighter (Str 16, Wis 16, Cha 15). AC -1 (*plate mail* +3), hp 75, AL LE. Montand has ruled Delaric for 25 of his 50 years, and the time is beginning to show on his face. Gray-haired and balding at the crown, Montand does not have the energies of his youth, which is why he no longer has any ambition to be overking. Rather, the slightly stooped prince has the conservative ambition simply to hold his powerful city, though he wants at all cost a Naelax overking to replace Ivid. Montand is over-cautious and does not act hastily. In campaign play, the major role of Montand and his city forces is that they are a crucial potential ally for any serious pretender to the throne in Rauxes. Montand's only son, Haragern, is apparently as passive as his father, but ambition lurks within the 19-year old princeling. One day soon the princeling might take the traditional step of ambitious sons of his house and take rulership of Delaric for himself.

**Nightsong:** 19th-level bard (Dex 16, Int 18, Cha 17). AC -3 (*bracers of defense* AC 3, *cloak of protection* +4), hp 59, AL NE. Nightsong is somewhere between 50 and 75 years of age; he isn't saying, and he looks almost timeless. Very tall, 6' 5", and slim, he has gray hair with a widow's peak and craggy, imposing features. He is animated, swift, and energetic beyond his years.

Nightsong is consumed by a passionate desire for knowledge of all things and matters magical and mythical. With his *amulet of the planes* he has gathered lore and treasures from far beyond Oerth's confines. Nightsong knows the burial laments for the victims of the Invoked Devastation, the poetry of the necromantic invocations of the Ur-Flannae, and he can sing the whispering hymns of

the long-dead Wind Dukes of Aaqa. Among his many magical items is a gold pendant which allows him to duplicate his own voice in harmony, an effect he uses rarely but to powerful impact.

Nightsong is also thoroughly evil. He believes that all things come to nothingness in the end, though as usual with such nihilists he shows a marked dislike for the prospect of his own death. He reveres Tharizdun as the embodiment of this principle, though he does not actively worship him. He has been approached by a spy for the Scarlet Brotherhood, but as yet has declined to act on their behalf. Should he do so, the effect on Aerdy would be dramatic. Nightsong has little but contempt for Montand and could easily depose him and place Haragern in his stead, ridding Delaric of the military loyal to Montand and establishing the Brotherhood as the true power of the city.

Montand allows Nightsong to stay in his city not least because of his fear of the bard. While he is in the city Montand can keep tabs on him. Should he exile him, he would not know where the bard might go, but he could be certain that Nightsong would have his revenge.

Nightsong plays at life. He enjoys vanities, jewellery, fine wines, and amusements and distractions. But it is just play; Nightsong almost has no heart. He has passions, but they are cold and cruel ones. He despises humanity collectively and individually, and the one being he perhaps still fears and respects is Gwydiesin (see the Grandwood chapter).

**Strychan, Prince of the House of Naelax:** 13th-level mage (Dex 16, Con 15, Int 18, Wis 16, Cha 17). AC 8, hp 49, AL NE (CE). Strychan is a small man, a mere 5' 5" and slimly built, with almost effeminate soft features and cool blue eyes. His handshake is firm, though, and there is steely ambition in the man. He enjoys his amusements and recreations, but they are only distractions. The real business is politics, and taking the throne.

Strychan is a master logician. He knows where every one of his spies is, and what they are up to. He can detail the provisioning, morale, and equipment of all the forces available to him at any given time. And he will soon be seeking skilled mercenaries through emissaries as far away as Carnifand, Jalpa, and even Rel Deven when the time comes.

Strychan is sizing up Montand, Hastern of Edge Field, and even Grenell as allies. But he has rejected Grenell on the grounds that the old man would try to seize Rauxes himself rather than allowing Strychan to become overking. So, Strychan is in no hurry. He is building up allies, forces, and resources for when the time is right.

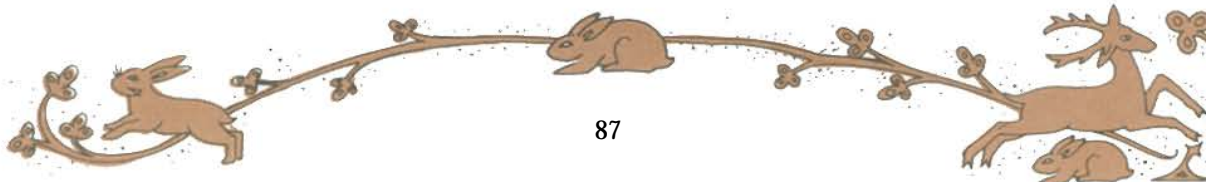
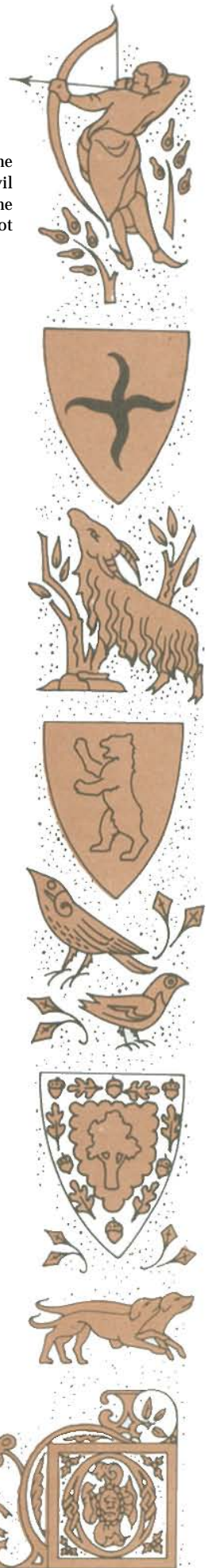
Strychan is a major power-player in Aerdy. His spies and agents work in the nearby lands, employing mercenaries to sabotage the overking's lines of supply and to acquire men and monies for the future. Those agents

## The Naelax Lands

might easily hire PCs (without the PCs knowing whom they ultimately serve) for all matter of missions—probably duping them in the bargain.

Finally, Strychan is as wantonly cruel as anyone one can find in the lands. He does not have the detached philosophy of someone like Nightsong, nor the excuse of

insanity which affects so many of his house. Neither is he an animus, with all the torments that brings. Simply, evil acts and sadism are the hallmark of the man, and the veneer of affability, humor, and style he has should not detract from realizing his true nature.







# The Sea Barons

Pop.: 45,000 (plus 8,000 on Leastisle)  
Capital: Aspedri (pop. 7,750)  
Ruler: Lord High Admiral Basmajian Arras  
Rulership: Moderate-High (except Leastisle)  
Cost Multiplier: 110%

## Divided Lands

The lands of the Sea Barons were among the last to be settled by the Oeridians, and here the folk are an Oeridian/Flan mix for the most part. The overking established the isles as four Baronies; Asperd Isle, Oakenisle, Fairisle, and Leastisle. Naval power, patrolling the coasts of the Great Kingdom from Bellport far to the south, was concentrated here, with the Lord High Admiral being determined from the outcome of a naval battle fought between the baronies. Asperd Isle won that battle, and Asperdi has become the largest town and center of power in these isles.

Militarily, the Sea Barons simply stayed out of the Greyhawk Wars. With war far to the west, and Rauxes many hundreds of miles away, the old Lord High Admiral Sencho Foy could decide that the threats of the northern barbarians, clearly excited into a war-seeking frenzy, were too dangerous to ignore. Dispatching navies to Relmor Bay to fight Nyronde would be suicidal, especially with the overthrow of the Lordship of the Isles leaving the southern waters of the Aerdi Sea more dangerous than ever.

The old admiral suffered one of those sudden deaths so common among Aerdy rulers, and his replacement is a stern and hard man who has the support of the barons of the two remaining isles, Fairisle and Oakenisle. All are aware that they are faced with increased threats and unknowns. The northern barbarians, no longer at war on land, have more time and resources to spend raiding the Solnor Ocean. While coastal cities offer good targets, so do the wealthy lands of the Barons. To the south, the Scarlet Brotherhood has sent its spies and agents to Asperdi and Oakenheart. They have been rebuffed, but all the Barons fear that a naval invasion might be mounted on them from the Lordship of the Isles. Then there are the new elven lands of Lendore, an unknown. No threat seems to come from them, but due to the magical barriers around those isles, the Barons cannot know what is happening there, and this makes them insecure.

There are also divisions among the Sea Barons which heighten that insecurity. Most seriously, Leastisle fell to pirates and buccaneers at the end of the Greyhawk Wars. Most of these men were fleeing the eastern coastal cities of Aerdi, but they brought enough mercenaries and seapower to sack Vernport. They now sail widely, attacking any target which looks soft enough, from North Province to Hepmonaland. As yet, they have avoided any

raids on the other isles of the Barons after one abortive attack against Port Elder. The Sea Barons lack the will to strike against the 8,000 or so ne'er-do-wells on Leastisle, again because they fear that the men and ships they might lose in such an action would leave them vulnerable to other enemies.

The other division is one of politics and temperament. Basmajian favors an alliance, or at least a truce, with the barbarians and Ratik. His argument is that this would remove the greatest threat to the Sea Barons, and leave them better able to handle the others. However, the Barons of the other isles do not agree. They point out that such an agreement might not go down well with the eastern Aerdi cities with which the Sea Barons trade.

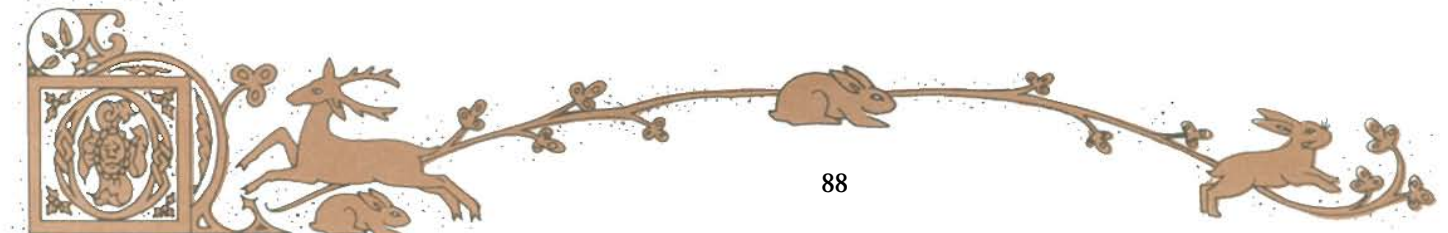
In the case of Rel Astra, they might get away with it since barbarians rarely raid that far south. However, the Five of Roland, and the ruler of Ountsy, would certainly react badly, and the Sea Barons could ill-afford to lose those trade links. The temperamental division is with the younger sea captains and young bucks of the baronies, who are more aggressive and believe that, with their seapower still mostly preserved, the Barons should be more enthusiastic about raiding and piracy (not to mention retaking Leastisle). The old Medegian lands offer a soft target and the Barons raid there, but apart from the occasional foray into Hepmonaland to loot the spices, ivory, and furs which come from that vast land, that is about the limit of the Barons' current exploits.

Basmajian and the other Barons want to keep their ships close to home for protection; the younger men want to sail the blue seas and oceans in search of adventure and bounty, freed as they now are from rulership by Rauxes.

Finally, Basmajian is well aware that there always has been rivalry between the Barons themselves, especially between Asperdi and Oakenheart. He has to be sure that he can count on the support of his fellows, rather than assassination by poison or dagger (the weapon he used to eliminate the previous lord high admiral, Sencho Foy).

## Trade and Bounty

These isles are fertile and beautiful. The climate here is warm and mild, and while grains and livestock do not fare so well here, the natural riches of the islands are considerable. Bananas, galda fruit, plantains, and figs grow in abundance. Rock iguanas are as common here as are rats in Rauxes, and unlike those vermin, their tails make excellent eating, marinated and roasted. Wild goats clamber the cliffs and are hunted for their meat. Some islanders will even tell the visitor that the seagulls here taste better, less fishy and tough, than anywhere else. But with the abundant seafood available, few eat the birds. Clams (especially the giant clams of Fairisle's coasts), large striped tuna-like fish, and small squid are the staple



## The Sea Barons

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seafoods.

These goods alone are in demand by the hungry cities of Aerdi, but the isles have further resources. Oakenisle is named after a unique species of fine oak which appears to flourish in saline soil and sea breezes, and the superb wood it yields is excellent for ship construction. The oaks grow very slowly, however, so the wood is in short supply and thus commands very high prices.

Fairisle has small wooded pockets which contain spice bushes and plants, and herbs much in demand by alchemists and herbalists. The strange Tar Hill of Asperd Isle yields a thick, resinous tar of excellent adhesive and waterproofing qualities; when treated with an ammoniac solution it becomes as hard as steel, and thus has a range of obvious uses. The Sea Barons are rich men from their trade, and as a result they can afford the mercenary garrisons which secure their towns and forts. Those mercenaries are part of the imports the Sea Barons take in return for their goods, but they also acquire metal weapons and armor for their defense (since the isles have no metal ore deposits), worked utensils, coinage (from Rel Astra), and also stone for construction purposes.

## Rulership

Each Baron administers his isle as his personal fief. An interesting twist is that house affiliations count for little or nothing here; the separation of the Sea Barons from the mainland has divided them from their Houses, and they now regard their blood relatives and loyal liegemen as an extended family. Most of the relatives have been in the service of the Barons and their ancestors for generations. Captaincy of sea vessels usually passes from father to son (rarely, to a daughter) unless the offspring is conspicuously unsuited to it. In this event, talented newcomers may gain a command if they prove themselves as mates.

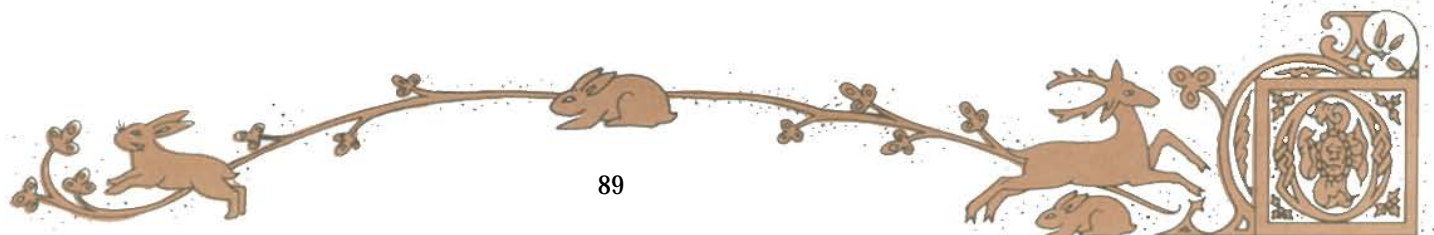
If the Barons show more indulgence and kindness to those immediate liegemen and retainers than many other nobles do, they do not do so in the case of the common-folk. Most people here are serfs, their bodies and lands owned by the Baron, and they are subject to his wishes. Given the relative richness and ease of life here (taxes and tithes are low by Aerdi standards), people are not too unhappy with their lot. In any event, many serfs have their life eased by the fact that the Barons and their liegemen often have slaves in their households, save in Oakenisle. These slaves are humans taken from Hepmonaland for the most part. Thus, Barons do not make excessive demands in the way of service from their serfs.

## Dangers of the Isles

Apart from barbarian raids, the isles of the Barons have their own hazards. Poisonous snakes are fairly common on most of the islands, with the deserted Serpent Isle infested with them. In the coastal waters, one of the nastiest hazards (and an excellent discouragement to diving for pearls or large clams) are the great rainbow-hued moray eels which are all too common. Their bites are vicious, and the moray will not release a victim from its jaws even when slain. However, the islanders take a symbolic revenge on this enemy by their tradition of roasting morays over charcoal fires during Brewfest and feasting on their flesh—which is an acquired taste, to put it mildly.

Sahuagin are the major sentient menace of the coastal waters. They do not organize themselves to do more than make opportunistic attacks on small fishing boats, but every year a score or more lives are lost to these predatory creatures. In the past two years, the sahuagin have grown more bold and even attacked a coaster recently, and some fear that someone, or something, is organizing and directing the creatures. Since their numbers, and home location, are unknown, this makes people increasingly anxious.

The waters and coastlines of the isles are not without their dangers. Strong cross-currents can send a small vessel with an inexperienced captain or fishing crew







# The Sea Barons

many miles out to sea, with generally northern currents flowing up from the warmer southern waters. Whirlpools or tsunami are, however, very rare events, and gale or storm force winds and massive downpours are not too common. However, most people recall the three-day storm of 578 CY, which some laughingly called "Hurricane Ivid."

## Asperd Isle

Largest of the islands, with some half of the total population, Asperd Isle has been the dominant power of the Sea Barons since Baron Asperd won that fateful naval battle centuries ago. Basmajian has three ocean-going galleons here, a main fleet of 12 coasters (with seaworthiness of 70%). There is also a fishing fleet of some 15 vessels, though they almost always stay within two miles or so of shore.

By informal understanding with the eastern Free Cities, visiting Aerdi vessels only come to Asperdi through Ironport. Most trade is conducted by the Barons' ships traveling west, but sometimes a Winethan vessel or one from Roland will travel here. Visitors are only allowed to disembark if they are personally known to the Naval Phalanx of Asperdi, have been invited by the Baron or a liegeman, or if they buy a visiting permit from that organization. This costs 150 gp, a price which discourages most visitors. And the permit purchaser also must be tattooed with the design of an iguana's head on his left forearm—relatively few casual travelers venture here. At least, if they do, they don't land in Ironport.

## Asperdi

Asperdi is a walled town, set back from the coast, mostly built of a hard reddish-brown stone taken from a quarry to the east long exhausted of its riches. It is bustling and lively, with several large markets and a strong line of armorers and ironworkers in addition to the more predictable naval artisans. The folk of the town, and the isles generally, almost all favor the combination of loose pantaloons and a baggy, wide-sleeved cotton blouse, though those of primarily Flan blood still use face-painting as an additional decoration. Bright colors are generally worn, so on a sunny day Asperdi is a vivid sight, with its literally colorful people walking in the shadow of the ornately-decorated city walls. Most carry long, heavy, curved daggers which can be treated as short swords for the purposes of damage, weapon speed, etc.

Any town of seagoing folk has a rowdy quality, with violence not far from the surface. Asperdi is no exception. Basmajian's Naval Phalanx act both as a city watch and as judge and jury in the case of offenses; this is a place of summary justice. The city prison is greatly feared, since it is dilapidated and vermin-infested and in hot weather in

particular death from disease and infection is commonplace. For this reason, Asperdi doesn't attract many thieves. The forbidding crenellated tower overlooking the town is too visible a reminder of where they will probably die if they are detected in their nefarious activities.

Among the main power factions of Asperdi are the guilds of various artisans and the priesthood of Procan. They, together with the commanders of the city watch, who are Basmajian's galleon captains, form an advisory council to the Baron. Also on that council is the wizard Livensten, a true eccentric who often turns up for meetings in partial states of undress because he has forgotten to put all his clothes on. Livensten's passion, however, is inventions and tinkering. The new astrolabe he has just invented—and his almanacs showing how to compute latitude and distances from the position of sun and moons—is receiving considerable approval from the galleon captains. These aids have enabled the Sea Barons to become true ocean-goers should they wish, in contrast to their traditional role as coastal defenders and patrollers.

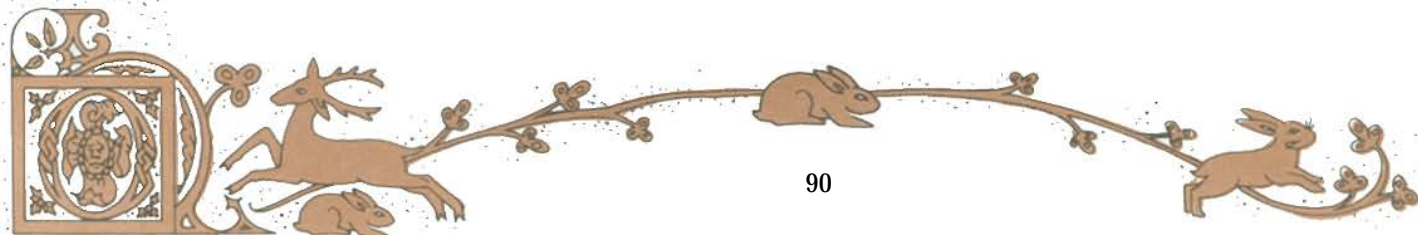
This is a mixed blessing for Basmajian, since it encourages his younger captains to do precisely what he doesn't want them to do, namely to set off on great voyages of discovery far east across the Solnor.

Finally, Asperdi is home to a small matriarchal group whose origins are in the bloodlines of the Rhennee, the bargegoers of the central Flanaess. How they came here is lost in the mists of time, but this community has been here for so long that no one really cares any more. With their mixture of soothsaying, divinations, herbalism, and a little symbolic ju-ju cursing when it suits them, the women are much respected by the men of the islands, who are extremely superstitious about them. One of the women, known as the rhenata, will always be asked to give her blessings to any new vessel about to take its first voyage, and usually to any ship about to set sail for longer than a week or so out of port. This precaution is always doubled with asking for the blessings of a priest of Procan, of course, so the cost of setting sail can be quite high at times. Blessings are not given gratis.

## Ironport

The only natural harbor along the rocky shoreline of Asperd Isle, Ironport is a magnificent sight. The stone walls and cathedral to Procan built facing the bay are massive, nearly a hundred feet high, with incredible decorations: arabesques, symbols of Procan, stone anchors adorning the base of the walls, and the symbols of ropes and chains strung along below the battlements. Atop the very center is a 20-foot statue of Procan himself, a forbidding and truly impressive sight.

Ironport is not large—only some 2,000 folk live within the town. But it has a grandeur and sternness to its archi-



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ecture, and its people are likewise thrifty, pragmatic, and (it must be said) relatively humorless souls. The naval quarter is walled off from the rest of the city so that drunken sailors do not offend the sense of propriety of the rest of the town.

## Tar Hill

Tar Hill is a dangerous place; far more dangerous than all but a very few people know. Its surface appearance is strange enough, for below the slopes of the 500-foot peak lie many pits of resinous tar which are excavated for their special bounty. The thick, gluey tar pits are littered with the bones of huge animals, dinosaurs and the like, and some folk frighten rebellious or naughty children with tales of how the terrible great lizards which still lie far below the hill, trapped alive in tar, will come and feast on their flesh if they don't stop behaving badly.

What very few know is that, below the hill, there is indeed a hidden terror; the Cauldron of Night itself. Basmajian is the only one on the isles who knows of this, and the entrance to the Cauldron—fully 600 feet below ground and accessed through winding and dangerous mineshafts. It is protected with very powerful *glyphs* and other warding spells. The Cauldron is a great natural amphitheatre of ebony stone, with a central depression 50 feet across and seemingly endlessly deep, for it is filled with a magical darkness no scrying spell can penetrate. Radiating intense evil, the Cauldron is almost a sentient thing. Mages of great power who have come seeking stone for making artifacts have had the very marrow in the bones frozen and their bodies shattered into dust here, while others of much lesser attainments have been able to take one of the spine-like stalactites of the Cauldron by simply reaching out and breaking it off.

The Cauldron almost seems to choose who it will allow to harvest its dark riches and craft them into works of evil power. Yet, those mages who take something from the Cauldron always pay a heavy price for it, driven insane by their own creations or dragged off screaming by some gloating fiend, to endure untold horrors in the Abyss.

Basmajian maintains a mercenary force of 100 well-armed and equipped warriors, with his most trusted adjutant in command, ostensibly to guard the tar pits (which yield much money for him) but also to make sure none enters the shafts leading to the Cauldron of Night. In truth, any who did so unprepared would meet a swift and grisly end, either fried alive by detonating *glyphs* or consumed by the monsters which prowl the shafts, among which xorn and earth elementals are perhaps the least dangerous.

## Oakenisle

Oakenisle is a riot of vegetation. Not just the strange

ancient oaks which give the islands its name, but thorny palm trees, hard-barked dwarf figs, and many succulents and scrub bushes cover almost every square inch of the island. Travel across land is difficult; all movement rates are at half maximum. The island is also alive with small lizards and snakes, rodents and vermin, fruit-eating birds, and a wide variety of insects. Among them are the dangerous giant dragonflies of the damper, eastern half of the island, which has a high rainfall rate and is almost permanently half-shrouded in mist during the spring and fall.

This is a wild, untamed island, despite centuries of human occupation. The land is almost infertile if vegetation is burned and cleared. Away from Oakenheart itself, there are no settlements of even village size, only the wooden huts of foragers and trappers.

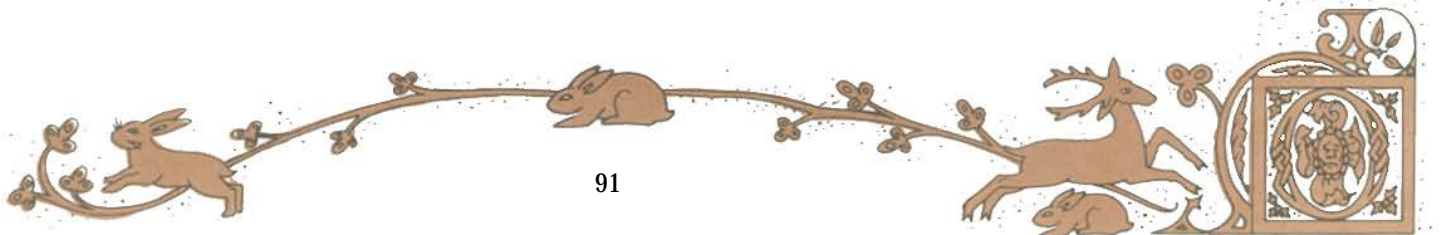
Baron Jamzeen of Oakenisle is old now, having ruled this island for more than half a century. His triplet sons create permanent problems, both for their old father and between themselves. The three are constantly trying to outdo themselves with feats of derring-do against barbarians, and it is a major surprise that they are all still alive. They certainly know more about the bottom of empty rum bottles than they do of naval warfare. The young and reckless are in the ascendant here, for Jamzeen increasingly lacks the will to bring his fractious juniors and descendants to heel.

Because of Oakenisle's impenetrability and wildness, sahuagin and other monsters prowl the coasts more often than they do the other islands. While Jamzeen has a bounty of 50 gp per sahuagin head brought to him, this is where these crafty creatures are increasingly beginning to make inroads. Oakenisle is said to have several old ruins scattered among its vine-infested rocky lands, and all manner of rumors pertains to them. Few bother to investigate, but the paladin Karistyne of the Cairn Hills traveled here incognito two years past and looted a treasure-trove of an unknown wizard on the east coast. What she retrieved, she has not revealed.

Jamzeen is generally a staunch ally of Basmajian, but one bone of contention between them concerns slavery. While Jamzeen is as evil as any of the Sea Barons, he has a particular distaste for slavery and berates Basmajian often on this score. Slavery is outlawed on Oakenisle, which is not to say that its captains do not take slaves and sell them in Asperdi when the opportunity arises.

## Oakenheart

Oakenheart is the one natural harbor on the island it dominates. Though the city has stone walls and great harbor gates which are bronze-coated (and magically protected both against corrosion from salt and wind, and fire-based attacks), much of the city is built from the wood of the great oaks for which the island is famous.





# The Sea Barons

Oakenheart has a more swashbuckling atmosphere than Asperdi, and in particular it has the great shipyards of Walfrenden, the master shipwright of the island—and the best in all Aerdi, it should be said. Walfrenden's vessels are of excellent design (+10% to all seaworthiness ratings). His latest design is a heavy caravel which the younger captains of the city's 17-vessel fleet (five galleons, 12 coasters) look upon with real yearning. *Starflir*, the first of these vessels, lies in harbor awaiting an inspired captain and devoted crew ready to sail forever across the eastern horizons, the triangular sail designs allowing far more freedom for the vessel to sail against prevailing winds than the larger square-rigged galleons. Walfrenden is nearing his 80th year, and what keeps him alive is looking forward to the day when the captain of his pride and joy sails back into Oakenheart and tells him the wonders and strangeness of the lands he has found across the endless azure miles of the Solnor Ocean.

More mundanely, Oakenisle is almost a sealed-off city. Visitors are not admitted without good reason (trade or otherwise), and the harborguard are not easily bribed. The Scarlet Brotherhood is feared here, since the assassination of two of the town's finest young sea captains six months ago is widely believed to have been due to their agents.

## Fairisle

Named for its rolling, fertile low hills and the white sand beaches of the northwestern coastline, Fairisle is notably more relaxed and informal than the other towns of the isles. Baron Pamdarn is but 22 years old, and he does not have the old sense of discipline and duty of the older Barons. However, he is not rash or reckless, and since this island is closest to the pirates of Leastisle, Pamdarn makes sure that his fleet of 10 coasters and three galleons is always on the alert. Pamdarn has hired three mages of Winetha to travel on his galleons, having an arsenal of fire-based spells at the ready to assault any pirate vessel he sees.

Fairisle is also noted for the colony of large wild apes in its northeastern scrub and woodland. These creatures are not by and large aggressive, but they are hunted for their furs by the islanders, who use blowpipes and nets to avoid damaging the valuable fur. Also, the island has some Suloise ruins on its southern tip, around Cape Rarn, although these are avoided by island folk. There are too many tales of the terrors of the Isle of Serpents for them to risk venturing there.

## Port Elder

Baron Pamdarn's youthfulness shows itself in the relative laxity of application of laws here. If a traveler seeks the

riotous, swashbuckling seaport of the isles, this is where to find it. Port Elder is a relatively open port, though any of Suel appearance are carefully watched by the naval militia, which is known as the Black and Golds on account of their uniforms. The Lordship of the Isles, and its Suel masters of the Scarlet Brotherhood, are too close for comfort here.

Pamdarn's Admiral of the Squadrons, Yendrenn Harquil, is a dashing and charismatic figure about town. His galleon, the *Seawolf*, bears Yendrenn's own symbol (a seawolf, unsurprisingly) on its sails rather than the sea serpent which almost all other Sea Barons vessels display. With his sallow-faced mage Rhennen aboard to give aid with *airy water*, *telekinesis* and other such spells, Yendrenn specializes in the discovery and looting of sunken wrecks, of which there are several south of Fairisle and on the eastern seaboard of all the islands.

Yendrenn is always eager to learn of such wrecks, if a diviner, bard, or sage knows of any such—and he agrees on a share of the booty recovered with his source. Though chaotic, he always holds to his word in such dealings. His recent recovery of nearly 40,000 gp worth of pearls and ingots of precious metal from the hulk of a Duxchan ship sunk in 515 CY has brought him fame.

Port Elder's city walls are being strengthened, given the threats to the south. From somewhere—no one is sure quite where—Pamdarn has managed to import a half-dozen stone giants who are busy at work. Since none on the islands speaks stone giant (save for Rhennen), and the stone giants don't converse in Common, there are all kinds of wild tales flying around about them, with some saying that they are fiends in giant form and that Pamdarn has sold his soul to some Lord of the Hells or the Abyss. Few worry about such matters, however; since the repulsing of the pirate raids on the city some years ago, people feel more secure behind strengthened city walls and don't much care who builds them so long as they get built.

## Leastisle

Captured and sacked by seamen fleeing the wars to the west, Leastisle is now an anarchic free-for-all. Half its population lives in the ruins of Vernport, with spasmodic and ineffective attempts made from time to time to rebuild the town. About a third of the island's folk are indigenous, many of them used as slaves by the invaders, who have become little more than pirates now. The booty taken from Vernport has mostly been used up, and the half-dozen vessels (all coasters and cogs) in the harbor are in need of repair. The pirates here lack any leadership since Petreden of Torquann, a minor prince who masterminded the sack of Vernport, was slain in a drunken brawl last Ready'reat.

Vernport, and the scattered small settlements of the

# The Sea Barons

island, are a den of evil cutthroats and scum. There are no few people of real power here, warriors, thieves and mages alike—for this is one of best places to hide from enemies one has made on the main continent. Somewhere on the island a priest of Nerull must be hiding in the overgrown huts or eastern sea caves, for sea zombies have been observed on the southern coasts. That puts great fear into people here, who tend to respond by drowning it in rum and samberra—a bitter, dry spirit fermented from the juices of succulent plants.

Leastisle is a great place to come to get one's throat cut, but a vessel from Rel Astra or even Ountsy will hazard it once in a while, especially to fish for the huge and tender sea clams which throng the western coastline. Such vessels always bring a mage with them, if only to announce their arrival with a *fireball* or similar show of strength, warning the pirates to leave well alone.

Leastisle is dangerous not just because of the desperation, evil, and the unpredictability of its folk but because this is surely where the Scarlet Brotherhood, acting through Duxchan, could secure a base on the southern flank of the Sea Barons. It seems certain that they will do so before long.

## The Isle of Serpents

This small isle was never settled by the Oeridians on account of the extraordinary number of poisonous snakes and reptiles inhabiting its densely vegetated uplands. The isle is hard to reach in any event, with sheer chalky cliffs rising 250 feet or more in some places. Sea serpents are often seen around the island, and nagas have been reported by the handful of travelers who braved the island's hazards.

Such travelers also tell of a set of sunken caves in the center of the island, and jade statues of a Suloise snake goddess which stand guard at their entry point. The statues are said to animate and attack any approaching who are not pureblood Suel females, so the depths of the caves have not been explored.

However, a small 6" tall miniature jade figurine of the goddess was taken by a distant ancestor of Pamdarn of Fairisle. He owns it still, though it is kept securely locked away on account of the curse it is said to bear. One sage has speculated that the goddess may be an aspect of Wee Jas, but the strangely alien facial features of the goddess, with slanted almond eyes, and short-cropped hair do not resemble the usual portrayals of that sinister power. Here is a mystery still waiting to be explored, providing the adventurer brings with him priests able to neutralize poison.

## Around The Isles

Pirates, barbarians, the Duxchan fleets, and sahuagin are

offshore menaces to the Sea Barons. However, in the waters around their coasts there are other races and creatures. Seawolves have been reported some 50 or so miles north of Asperdi Isle, though they have not entered the coastal waters yet. They appear to be organized, or familial, since they always have been seen in groups of a half-dozen or so. Rumors say that they are in some way bound to an area around the site of their sunken ship, which is said to have been a vessel bearing mages and arcane magics seeking seabed sites akin to the Cauldron of Night. No one knows for sure, but notably Yendrenn has not sought the wreck as he usually would if hearing of such a lost vessel.

Sea elves are almost never seen by the Sea Barons now. In the past, the neutral-aligned members of sea elf communities would sometimes trade and barter with the Barons on a fairly ad hoc basis, but they have not appeared in Asperdi for several years. It is said have retreated to the waters around the transformed Lendore Isles.

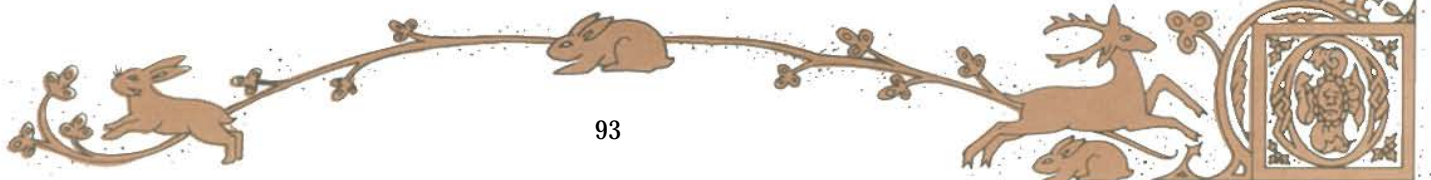
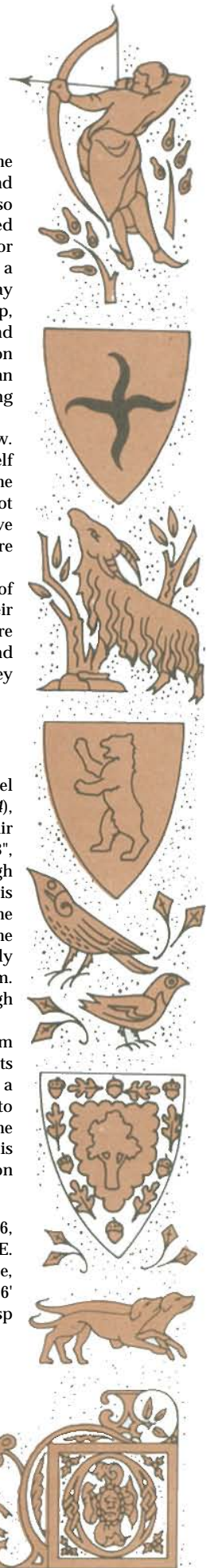
Lastly, there are persistent tales of an aquatic race of brownie-like creatures or sea sprites, not nixies or their kin, on the eastern shore of Oakenisle. These little folk are extremely elusive, but appear to be spying on the island and sometimes acting as sentinels or guards. What they are watching for, or watching over, is a mystery.

## Personalities of the Sea Barons

**(Lord High Admiral) Basmajian Arras:** 13th-level fighter (Str 18/00, Dex 17, Int 16). AC -2 (*chain mail* +4), hp 85, AL LE. Basmajian is 40 years old, with coppery fair hair and brown-green eyes. He lacks true stature at 5' 8", and is not a charismatic man, but his intelligence is high and he applies it capably to the problems of rulership. His natural Strength rating is 16; the *gauntlets of ogre power* he has are one of his two most prized magical items, the other being a *ring of swimming*. Basmajian is extremely sensitive to the fact that he can't actually naturally swim. A *ring of free action* is also always worn by the high admiral, likewise a richly bejewelled *longsword* +3.

Basmajian lives richly and well. He takes a cut from virtually every dealing in Asperdi, since he grants merchant licenses, and they are only given if he gets a kickback. He is content with his lot, and he seeks to preserve his own strength. Basmajian doesn't want the Sea Barons involved in anyone else's troubles, and this finds favor in Rel Astra in particular, since the protection of the Barons' coasters is not really needed there.

**(Baron) Jamzeen:** 10th-level fighter (Str 7, Dex 6, Con 6, Int 16, Wis 16). AC 3 (*chain mail* +3), hp 66, AL NE. Jamzeen's statistics are strongly affected by age, of course, since he is 77. Lean as a rake, the stooping figure of the 6' Baron is still impressive, for he has a full head of crisp





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white hair and his gray eyes still express vigilance and intelligence. Jamzeen was a notorious rake in his youth, and still is; his triplet sons Jamair, Jaqiran, and Nandain are but 19 years old. Jamzeen has had a succession of "wives" in his long life. Other offspring have left the isles, seeking their fortunes elsewhere, or are dead, often at the hands of jealous siblings.

Jamzeen always has been happy to be Number Two. It made for an easier life. But now the old man's grip is faltering; perhaps the death of Sencho Foy, a friend for half a century and a man with whom he had a long shared past, has drained him of some of his will. He doesn't resent Basmajian for killing Sencho; such things happen, and Jamzeen is philosophical about these matters given his alignment. He supports Basmajian, whose conservative policy is one he fully agrees with, though he has differences with him concerning barbarians and slavery. But Jamzeen grows tired, less willing to attend to the everyday practicalities of governing his island, and it may well be that one of his sons will do the time-honored thing and arrange his father's burial rites (and those of his siblings) before the realization of their imminent demise has occurred to them.

**Livensten:** 11th-level mage (Int 18). AC 7 (*ring of protection* +3), hp 27, AL NE (LE). Livensten is 5' 5", slim of build with dark brown hair and hazel eyes. Unprepossessing of appearance, the 56-year-old mage neglects himself to the point of periodically suffering eczema through not bathing properly. Standing next to him in hot weather is not a pleasant experience.

Livensten is obsessed with researching instruments and devices connected with time and travel. He has a library of lore on such matters of startling breadth, including sacred works of deities which as Labelas and Lendor. He constantly fiddles in his laboratory with new ways of measuring and recording. His astrolabe is one of his more successful inventions, and his *folding boat*, which he hires to captains in return for very large security deposits, is a greatly prized item. Livensten has Basmajian's support and patronage, so he does not have to worry about earning a living as such.

**(Baron) Pamdarn:** 9th-level fighter (Str 17, Con 17, Int 15, Cha 16). AC 6 (*ring of protection* +4), hp 80, AL NE. Pamdarn is young and inexperienced in rulership, but he is learning fast. He, like Jamzeen, dislikes slavery, because somewhere inside him a youthful love of freedom resents it. But he keeps quiet about this to Basmajian. Pamdarn knows that he has a certain amount of leeway in the court of the lord high admiral, and he doesn't push his luck; he uses the tolerance he gets to allow his captains greater freedom to sail the oceans than those of the other Barons. Pamdarn is relatively impoverished, since he has been saving funds to purchase the

caravel *Starflie* and has also bought instruments of Livensten's devising.

Pamdarn is 6' 1", well-built, with very fair hair and blue eyes. Some mutter that there is Suel blood in his veins (actually, he has more Flan blood than anything else). His father died but a year ago, and Pamdarn is just emerging from the depression this brought on him. The company of his friend Yendrenn has also done much to cheer him.

Nonetheless, Pamdarn is no pleasant soul. He is ambitious and unscrupulous. If he has some idealisms, he is also quite unconcerned about how he achieves his ends. Because of his lack of monies, he recently had an Ountsy merchant executed on a trumped-up charge of sedition and arson, confiscating his vessel and goods in the bargain. Basmajian forced him to return the vessel and most of the money, but this episode illustrates Pamdarn's personality quite clearly.

**Walfrenden:** 7th-level fighter (Str 7, Con 7, Int 16, Wis 18). AC 10, hp 29, AL NE (CE). Walfrenden is 78, 5' 5", wholly bald with gray eyes and a notable tremor these days. Still, the old captain has a hungry energy within him. Maimed by an infected seawolf claw many years ago, so that his left leg is almost useless and he walks with a heavy stick, Walfrenden took to the design and building of ships. He rose swiftly in his profession so that he is now the master shipwright of the barons.

All his life, Walfrenden longed to set sail under the starry night skies and head forever eastward. He is a freedom-loving spirit, and he chafed at having to patrol and protect the Aerdy coastline. His caravel design delights him, for the vessel's combination of high seaworthiness and small size, allowing it to navigate close to coastlines and up river estuaries, is perfect for ocean-going and the exploration of new lands. Secretly, Walfrenden longs to take the first voyage on *Starflie* himself, so he can end his days under the stars with a chart of new lands explored in his hands. He has received a down-payment for the caravel from Pamdarn, and a condition of delivery is that Walfrenden is allowed to travel on the vessel.

Walfrenden knows well the history of the eastern Aerdy lands. He has met virtually everyone of any power in the isles over the years, and he also has the finest set of maps and charts of the coastline anywhere. He has a set of seaman's tales more varied and outrageous than anyone's, but he narrates them with panache and a real love of storytelling. Sea captains who, as children, sat on his knee and thrilled to tales of savage Hepmonaland or the orcs of the Pomarj (Walfrenden has sailed all of the Azure Sea), are every bit as ready now to bring the old man a tankard of ale and hear the same tales again.

**Yendrenn:** 11th-level fighter (Str 17, Dex 17, Int 16, Cha 17). AC 2 (*ring of protection* +5), hp 80, AL CN (N).

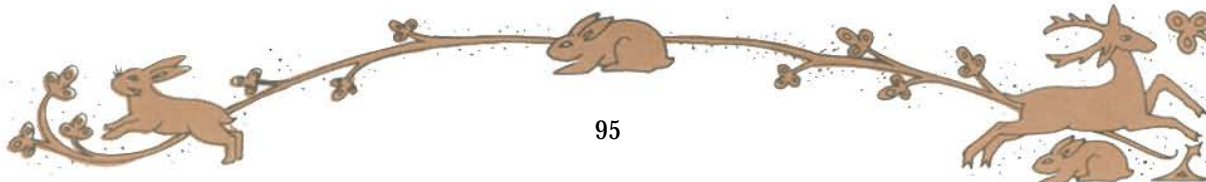
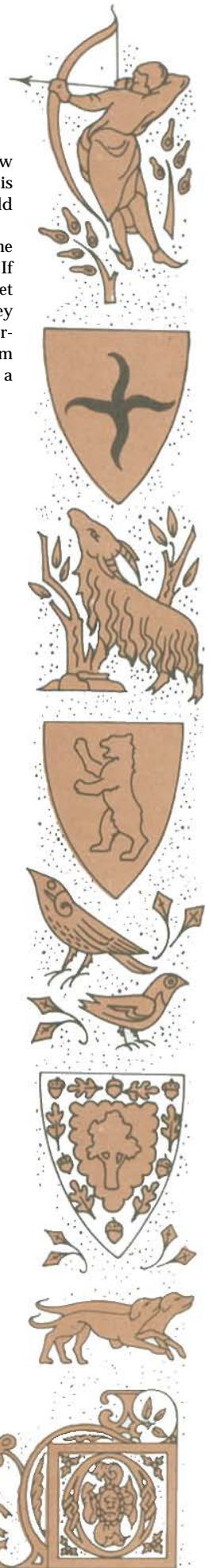
# The Sea Barons

Yendrenn may be only 25 years old, but he has had command of Seawolf for seven years, and his men regard him as the finest captain on all the seas of Oerth. A distant cousin of Pamdarn, he lost his own father a year before the young Baron, and thus the two have a shared experience and a strong bond between them. Yendrenn is handsome, fair of skin and hair, 6' 3", and always well-groomed, with his silk blouse unbuttoned to the navel. He is vain, but his vanity is not excessive.

Yendrenn is strongly loves freedom. He also has a real feel for history. He loves old maritime maps and charts; even if they are inaccurate, he just loves to take in their

sense of history, bygone days, and the sailors who drew them. He regularly begs Walfrenden for copies of his maps, and no little of Yendrenn's gold has gone to the old shipwright in payment for such.

Yendrenn also studies the myths and legends of the islands, and has an encyclopaedic knowledge of them. If any traveler wishes to know of the hidden and secret places of the islands, the captain will determine if they hail from the southern lands where the Scarlet Brotherhood may have spies and agents. If they are from somewhere else, the captain is ready to share an ale or a jigger of rum with them and talk of the islands' secrets.





# The Free Cities

The cities of Rel Astra, Ountsy, and Roland have much in common, though they certainly have their differences, too. Each is walled, a trading post, and the power center of the lands over which they lay claim. Each has high rulership, and a tyrannical system of government. Each maintains its own small fleet of coastal defense vessels, and loudly proclaims independence from Rauxes. The cities have a definite alliance. There is a mutual understanding between them that, should one fall, the others would be jeopardized. Thus, political emissaries travel from city to city keeping their rulers in touch, and showing formal marks of mutual respect. For all their differences, their fates are intertwined. Finally, the term "city" is something of a misnomer so far as Roland is concerned, since the place is but a town, but it has its pretensions.

## Rel Astra

Pop. City, 57,000; lands, 170,000  
Ruler: Drax The Invulnerable  
Cost Multiplier: 130%

From his throne in Rel Astra, Drax proclaims dominion over a huge swathe of land. He cannot enforce his will over the Grandwood, of course, but elsewhere he controls much of the fief he claims. The lands northwest of the Grandwood pay tribute to Drax, though they feign allegiance to Ivid. This is for several reasons. Firstly, because by sending some taxes to Rauxes the local landholders have learned that they can keep the overking's armies away from their lands. Ivid is not overly concerned about them since there is no major power focus here. Secondly, because Drax does not demand further taxes from them. Third, because Drax's Iron Nation knights have been dispatched when needed either to strike at those who fail to pay homage, as the decimation of Cranzer's Beacon in Ready'reat showed, or to assail any who attack those who do pay homage. Drax doesn't need to maintain garrisons everywhere. In dealing with small men, as the northwestern rulers are, he only needs to show that he can be crushing when he needs to be to earn their allegiance.

Drax has been clever with these lands. He does not need heavy taxes from them, but he does lay claim to a small number of veteran troops, whom he keeps posted in their homelands and whom are available to him. In this way, his rule is not onerous to the minor nobles beyond the Grandwood, since the "tithed" troops are not taken away to weaken their homelands.

Drax also lays claim to much of old Medegia, and here his claim is but a formality. These lands are in chaos and ferment, and Drax's claim is only to establish a precedent should some form of peace descend upon them. No one disputes the claim because no one cares.

Drax is an animus. He was an obvious target for Ivid, given the power and wealth of Rel Astra and Drax's position as scion of a rival royal house. During the wars, Drax sent armies to Rauxes as Ivid asked, but the crucial event was the sack of Medegia and the subsequent attempt to loot Rel Astra itself by troops which had become overfond of slaughter and pillage. Obviously, Drax was furious about this and ordered his own troops in the overking's service to pillage and ruin as many of Ivid's supply lines as possible. Those orders were intercepted, and Drax was magically abducted; for once, there was no advance warning from his fiend-sage.

Ivid released Drax, assuring him that the imperial armies had attempted to loot Rel Astra from a fit of over-exuberance and that their commanders had been suitably disposed of. Drax feigned understanding and alliance, but as soon as he returned to his city he began planning to overthrow the overking. He does not have any true natural allies in this. Other princes of his own house, Garasteth, are wary of the old tyrant. No one has ever truly known what Drax really thinks and believes, so no one has ever trusted him much. Drax's tactic, therefore, has been to accumulate as much wealth as possible to buy allies and resources, and to use the power he has to force others to accept him.

Many of Drax's old concerns, when he was but the constable mayor of Rel Astra, have evaporated. Once, Drax had to seek alliances with the Sea Barons and Medegia to balance the oppressive forces of the overking in North and South Province. Now, with North Province seceded and mostly concerned with barbarians, humanoids, and Rinloru's madman ruler, that threat is gone. South Province has no interest in this far-away city. The Sea Barons come to him, rather than the other way around.

Just as Drax has strengthened his rulership to the point of tyranny, he has many fewer external political threats to worry him.

## Rel Astra: The City

Rel Astra is a large city, even by Aerdy standards, with labyrinthine walls which divide it internally into Old City, Common City, and the charmingly-named Barbarian Quarter. Each of these areas has a distinctive atmosphere.

Old City is where Rel Astra's "old blood" is found. This doesn't necessarily mean that they are wealthier than others, but there is a subtle distinction between these folk and those of Common City. A man of the same occupation as someone from Common City will consider himself superior to that other. There is something of a slower and more assured quality to Old City folk, and here Rel Astra's oldest buildings are to be found in all their strange majesty, together with the fortress keep of the

# The Free Cities

city, occupied by Drax himself, and the offices of city government.

Common City has three-quarters of the town's indigenous population and is named after the Copper Common, reflecting the fact that this is the place where most merchants and markets are located. Barbarian Quarter is the only part of Rel Astra where foreigners are allowed to enter unless they have some special invitation from Drax himself (perhaps at the request of an important person within the city). Barbarian Quarter is next to the shipyards and wharfs of the city, and is livelier and obviously more cosmopolitan than the rest of the city.

Rel Astra is rife with despotism. Drax chooses who he consults and takes the advice he wishes to take. The commonfolk have the virtues of thrift, hard work, and sobriety which Drax constantly urges. They are dour, joyless folk; the predominant alignment is Lawful Evil. They also tend to be a religious folk, with the temples of Hextor, Nerull, and even Wee Jas being sizeable. Syrul's faith is outlawed, however, since a power of lies and deceit is entirely contrary to the Lawful city ethos.

## Trade and Travel

Rel Astra trades with virtually anyone. It has a fleet of six coasters and two heavy cogs for protection, and several small pilot vessels which guide foreign ships into the harbor. Ships come here from the Sea Barons, from Dullstrand (rarely), from northern Aerdy ports, and even from the barbarian lands. Initially, Drax allowed Duxchan vessels to trade, but now that he has taken stock of the Scarlet Brotherhood he no longer permits this. Even pirate vessels and a few ships which have looted, or traded with, the free Hepmonaland peoples have been known to bring their cargoes to Rel Astra.

Much trading thus uses Rel Astra as a safe haven and meeting place, but some trade also comes into and leaves the city overland. The southern road through Medegia is largely unsafe now, so this means traveling the route to Ernhand and Farlen and on into the main continent. Technically, this route lies along lands claimed by the Five of Roland. However, Rel Astra pays for the garrison at Ernhand, and Farlen is a shared village. The Iron Road, as this route is named, is very heavily patrolled by Drax's men and by troops based in Farlen. Attacks by Lone Heath and Grandwood men are still common, since rich pickings can be had from the caravans and merchants headed either along the road or the upper Mikar river.

## City Life and Folk

Rel Astra is a city of contrasts. The Barbarian Quarter is a place of license and vivacity. Sunndi elves, albino barbarians, Suel folk, even a handful of Hepmonalanders can be found here. A visitor may even find some Keolandish merchant travelers or Greyhawkers in this part of the

city. The Barbarian Quarter is crowded, overpopulated, noisy, and relatively lawless save for the vigilant Watch at the wharfs, warehouses, and markets. If one wishes to stay safe and secure here, it is possible to do so. If one prefers the high life and gambling with thieves and gap-toothed sailors from distant lands, that's possible, too.

Old City and the Common City, in contrast, have some very strange architecture. There are silent warrens and back alleyways with their own peculiar follies and oddly slanted and tilted buildings. Some parts of Rel Astra appear to be impossible; that is, one cannot make out how buildings stay upright. To this, one can add a variety of building styles and materials, and an extraordinary number of places to which some legend or other is attached. There are houses and streets haunted by the shades of wizards or murderers, sealed wells which are said to issue forth magical disease-ridden mists once every century, pawnbroker's shops where a lingering curse is said to lie on some dusty item the hunchbacked vendor will desperately try to offload on the visitor, and many such oddities besides.

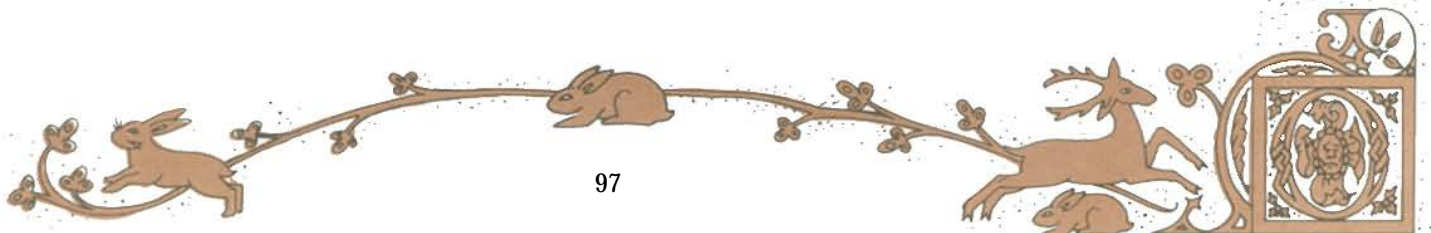
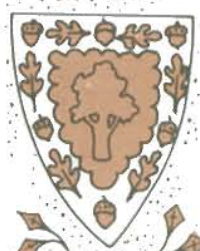
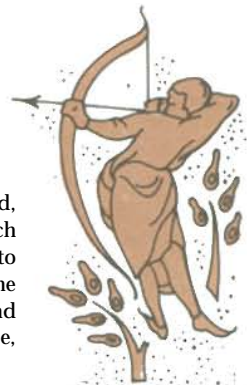
Some of the oldest families of Rel Astra are insular and inbred to a remarkable degree, some speaking a form of Old Oeridian as a familial patois. Trades and professions are virtually always handed down from father to son; the city is strongly patriarchal. And it is a matter of shame if one's eldest son takes up some trade other than that of his ancestors—such mavericks may be shunned by their families in perpetuity.

Rel Astra also has, by virtue of its size, some of the oddest and most specialized traders and shops anywhere. Selling Hepmonaland goods only is not uncommon, but Rel Astra also boasts one tiny, dusty little shop where only carved jade artifacts from the Shinazi people of that continent are sold. Those curiously fascinating little trinkets, often carved in the form of fabulous or enchanted beasts, are said to have magical qualities to ward off disease or magical control of one's mind. Whether this is true is uncertain, but they do radiate a faint abjuration or necromantic magic when *detect magic* is used.

The DM using the proficiencies system might consider etiquette checks for PCs. Rel Astrans have a precise code of address and manners, which differ between Old City and Common City, and making mistakes in the matter of address is something they readily take offense at.

## Armies and Forces

Drax's city is well-protected. The Iron Nation knights are 100 in number, heavy infantrymen, and there are garrisons of other standing troops in and around the city numbering nearly 2,200. They administer city justice and handle watch duties too, and they have good equipment





# The Free Cities

and excellent morale. Discipline is matchless, and woe betide anyone trying to bribe these highly Lawful men. Marching, square-bashing, and fitness training are emphasized for all the forces, so that these are tough men indeed. There are few females in the military, again a reflection of the city's patriarchy. The maritime forces of the city are readily recognizable by the tarred ponytails many of them wear, and most have unpleasantly discolored lips and teeth from the tobacco most of them appear to chew incessantly.

Drax also has excellent light and heavy cavalry at his disposal. Further, levies and militias of some 5,000 to 8,000 men can be drawn from the lands south of the city, and as many again could be relied upon from the claimed lands west of the Grandwood. An old treaty with Ountsy is still in force, allowing Drax to call upon that city's resources in time of war.

Drax can also call upon the services of the priests of Rel Astra. They are primarily priests of their power, as anywhere, but they are also strongly secondarily priests of Rel Astra and are always ready to defend it should the need arise. Their role in repulsing Ivid's armies was important during the Greyhawk Wars, and the priest-hoods are almost separate from the church hierarchies in the rest of Aerdy.

Rel Astra has also always attracted many wizards of a particular sort. Because of the safety of the city, combined with its Lawful ethos, wizards of Lawful Neutral alignment, have found the city much to their liking. However, necromancy is strongly controlled by a complex set of statutes. Those who combine the pursuit of power with a tough mental discipline, especially wizards revering or devoted to Wee Jas, find Rel Astra an agreeable home. Because such wizards are often given to the arts of invocation, or other "tough" specializations, they provide powerful protection for the city. The mages' guild of the city is strong, and its Guildmaster Vernnend is one of the few who Drax regularly consults.

## The Fiend-Sage

Lastly, Rel Astra is infamous for a molydeus tanar'ri which makes infrequent appearances in the city, and which has some kind of pact or deal with Drax. The tanar'ri is said to advise him on the extraplanar dealings and travels of powerful folk, mages, and otherwise, in Aerdy; what he gets in return is unknown. The rare sightings of the richly-dressed tanar'ri, haughtily parading itself with Drax, are memorable. They help keep resistance to Drax's tyranny subdued, for who would wish to challenge a despot with such an ally? Likewise, external enemies are kept at bay for fear that anything they try, Drax will be forewarned of.

## Marshevel the Merchant

A much less well-known menace in Rel Astra is this man, secretly a preceptor of Midnight Darkness. Marshevel often travels to Ountsy to hear news there, since that city is more open than Rel Astra. But Drax's city is the place to see (and perhaps to slay) the powerful and well-to-do. Marshevel is described in the Personalities section below.

## Ernhand

The garrison at Ernhand protects the ferry route across the Mikar, and, as noted, while technically within Roland's claimed lands it is maintained by Rel Astra. It has 300 troops, with half being light cavalry who patrol road and river extensively. Around the village and keep there are several stabling and horse-rearing farmsteads where the swift horses used by the Rel Astra cavalry are bred and trained. These horses fetch high prices (treat as light warhorses with a minimum of 5 hp/die and a basic MV of 24), and so the farmsteads have to be guarded against horse thieves.

Ernhand also boasts a small clique of Rel Astran bounty hunters who pursue fugitives from Drax's city into the Lone Heath and the Grandwood. Led by a priest of Pyremius, this silent bunch of murderers is shunned by all. They have their own fortified house on the edge of the town, and sometimes the sounds of unfortunates being "interrogated" by these men keep the whole village awake at night. Even the Lone Heath rangers fear these men, who are not averse to kidnapping one or more of their number and torturing and slaying them for the evil pleasure of it.

## Strinken

Strinken is the southernmost point of Drax's effective realm of rulership; beyond lie the chaotic remnants of Medegia (those lands, technically claimed by Drax, are detailed in the following chapter). The stone tower and enclosures of Strinken are thronged with troops patrolling the northern road and the lucrative nearby farmsteads. Oilseed and citrus fruits (an important commodity for preventing scurvy, thus having a good sale price in ports) are grown there. So the lands are important to Drax.

Strinken is notable for its flying ballistas, an experimental design developed by a mage and a gnome engineer. Only two aerial platforms have been developed to date, but these are potentially deadly weapons, and Drax has no intention of allowing others to see them until he has a whole fleet of the things. For this reason, travelers are not usually allowed within four or five miles of the place, with troops turning them back northward.

# The Free Cities

## Roland

Pop. Town, 5,000; lands, 75,000

Ruler: The Five of Roland

Cost Multiplier: 140%

Roland is a unique place. Nestled into the Gull Cliffs, the Bay of Gates is a freak harbor. The cliffs around Roland are 150 to 400 feet high, but the harbor is deep and vessels can draw virtually up to the sea gates of Roland itself, located in the Bay of Gates. By virtue of those cliffs, Roland is highly defensible, which is why the Oeridians founded it. Set back from the harbor, the place is immune to maritime invasion, which was judged worth the necessity of hauling cargoes from the harbor into the town itself along the very smooth trail which connects town and harbor.

Roland has been the subject of usually abortive barbarian raids in the past, but recently Frost Barbarians have come offering trade and peace, and the Five of Roland are considering whether this might be a good idea. Because of its security, the town has only three coasters for patrols and always has been used to the protection of the Sea Barons, who are still a major trading partner. The only major outpost the town maintains is Gredlen, which stands at the triple border with Winetha's lands and those of the overking himself, so by and large Roland has few outings and overheads. The town is not rich, but it isn't poor either.

Roland is virtually a split-level city. Most of it is built on the hills by the coastline, but there are also extensive caves below, excavated by the dwarves and gnomes who once lived in considerable numbers in the Gull Cliffs. Now, there are perhaps 150 dwarves and 200 gnomes in the town, with 250 dwarves and 1,000 gnomes in small scattered settlements in the Gull Cliffs. The invading Oeridians initially tried to wipe out the dwarven and gnomish clans, but over the centuries some kind of uneasy truce was proclaimed. In the 150 years since The Five came to rule Roland, demihumans have been considerably better treated. Few of them are of good alignments, however, with the majority being neutral and no few being very definitely evil.

In the caves and catacombs below Roland, some folk actually make their homes, though this is unusual. Rather, there is a system of military bunkers and stores, and also several catacombs of mummified bodies. A long-forgotten town ruler once decided to have his body mummified after death and placed here, and the fashion caught on among the better-off. It has become a sign of rank and privilege to have one's body disposed of in this way, rather than burned and the ashes scattered on the sea (the traditional method).

Obviously, such catacombs attract necromancers as dung attracts flies, so they are carefully guarded by

detachments of the town watch.

Despite its trade function, with goods coming from the Sea Barons in particular, Roland is as insular and parochial as one would expect from such an isolated place. The local dialect of Common, and the strong accents of the Rolanders, make it difficult to understand them easily. The town's merchants and traders generally use their own promissory notes rather than imperial coinage for trade between themselves, and barter is commonplace.

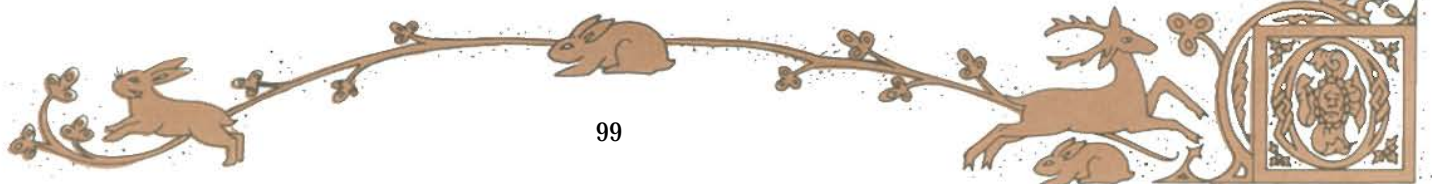
However, Roland has a highly unusual form of government, being ruled by a group known simply as The Five. A despotic Garasteth ruler was overthrown in a military coup, and the leaders of that coup instituted their own despotism instead. To avoid assassination attempts, they kept their identities secret, meeting at irregular intervals in the windowless marbled keep known simply as Fortress. While The Five know who each other are, they meet masked and disguised in Fortress. When one dies, and it is time to select a replacement, the position of rulership is usually hereditary, but from time to time one of The Five has been known to be hurried along to an early grave to allow a particularly promising "external candidate" to take his or her place.

None of The Five trusts each other, of course. Each is perpetually uncertain of which of the others is allied with anyone else, so it is rare for one member to attempt to assassinate or ruin another. Thus, this pattern of rulership is stable enough. Since the wars, however, a spanner has been thrown into the works.

The preeminent mind among The Five has been, for many years, the mage Jireen. His intelligence is truly piercing, and he had a way of organizing the meetings of the rulers, and resolving disputes, which marked him out as a real leader. Unfortunately, Jireen was one of the last victims of Ivid's crazed enthusiasm for revivification, and he is now one of the legion of animuses. Jireen has a particular obsession, the belief that a magically created and almost undetectable doppelganger stalks him at Ivid's bequest. Indeed, Jireen's madness has advanced to the point where some days he actually has brief spells when he suffers the delusion that he is that doppelganger. During these spells, Jireen is depersonalized and mute.

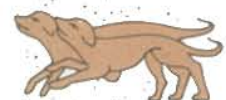
This makes it very difficult for Jireen to lead The Five as he used to do. The others recognize what has happened to him, and are uncertain. On the one hand, they feel that they must do away with this madman. On the other, they are very afraid of an animus-mage and what he might do should any attempt on his life fail. At a recent meeting, Jireen screamed and raged at the others for conspiring with the doppelganger to replace him; since three of them had just met to discuss how to get rid of the mage, they feared that he must have had magical warning of their plans, though this was but coincidence.

The others of The Five are: Ramshalak, a 12th-level





# The Free Cities



priest of Pyremius; Vornekern, a 12th-level thief; the 13th-level female warrior Lord Barbern (she takes the title Lord rather than Lady, regarding it as having more gravity), and Admiral Quaanser, a 10th-level fighter who has major responsibility for all aspects of city defense. None of them has the power, magical strength, or guts to overcome Jireen, though Ramshalak is the most murderous and determined of them. None has any powerful house affiliations which might allow them to call on outside aid, a consequence of Roland's long history of isolationism. However, Vornekern has secretly met with Drax recently, and discussed a deal in which Drax would slay Jireen and Vornekern would become despot of Roland as a liegeman of Drax. In return, the thief would provide Drax with full information relating to the defense and layout of Roland, allowing Rel Astra's lord to mount an invasion with ease. As yet, Drax sees no real advantage in this, since his ultimate concern is with Rauxes and Ivid. But if he could also reappropriate Ountsy, then this would give him a monopoly on east coast trade. If Drax strikes, it will be to take both Roland and Ountsy, not just one.

## The Gull Cliffs

Apart from the small dwarf and gnome settlements here, the Gull Cliffs are riddled with caves and natural passageways. There are certainly several magical locations. The best-known is the Fading Ground of the Blood Obelisk of Aerdy (*From The Ashes*, Campaign Book) but there are also said to be at least two burial chambers of Ur-Flan mages or necromancers. Many come seeking them, but they have not yet been located even by the most penetrative magical scrying. There are also traveler's tales of an albino clan of gnomes far below the hills, said to be extraordinarily swift of movement and able to *meld into stone* as a natural ability. One or two claim they are guardians of some site sacred to a gnomish deity, others that they restructure deep passageways to the Underdark to keep intruders and adventurers away from some site of dark magic, possibly a temple of Tharizdun.

## Farlen

The village of Farlen is maintained jointly by all three Free Cities, since they all need it as a trade outlet, and the garrison of 350 troops guarding the 1,300 villagers is drawn from all of them. This makes for animosity and frictions, especially since the Rel Astran commander of the troops is a weak and cowardly man who blusters and bullies his way through commands. This makes his Rolander and Ounstian adjutants contemptuous and resentful.

The village has two unexpected buildings which make it noteworthy. The first is a huge cathedral of Pholtus,

now looted and pillaged, which was built by a rich and eccentric convert to the faith some 200 years ago. Its peculiar architectural style mixed traditional Oeridian with Ketite and even Keolandish influences. The second is a large library and scriptorium, again built by a rich and eccentric Garasteth noble who retreated here centuries ago. The library's upkeep is maintained from monies left by that noble, and by fees charged to the scholars who come to consult some of the more obscure scrolls, parchments, and tomes. The library is complete (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, p.107) for anything the DM determines to be "social science"—including history, languages and philosophy). For other subjects of sage fields of study, roll 1d10: on a roll of 1, the library is complete; 2-8, it is partial; 9-0, it is nonexistent. Fees to be paid are fairly hefty and have to be individually arranged with the wily old librarian, Rimann Tigana.

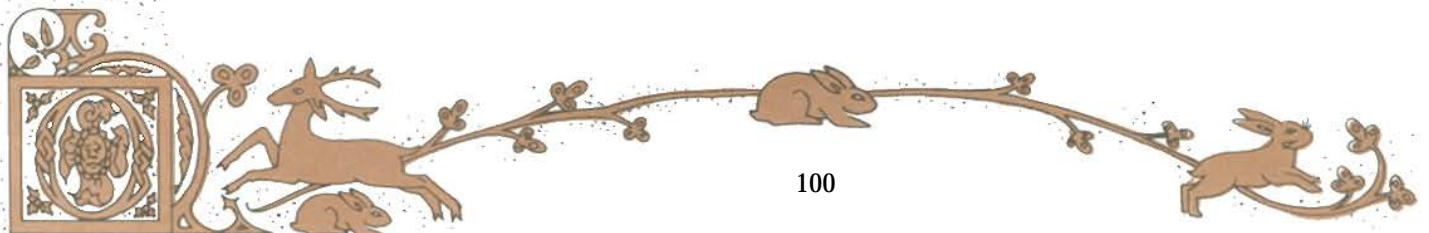
Tigana is a cousin of the resident alchemist of Greyhawk City, a fact which he never fails to mention to visitors. The DM should determine fees as suits the level of costs in the campaign.

## Gredlen

Gredlen has a difficult strategic location at the junction of three fiefs, and the village of 1,300 folk has also been raided by deserting imperial army men and orcs twice in the previous spring. Hence, maintaining a garrison here—which has perforce been expanded to 200 infantry and 50 light cavalry—is an expense Roland could do without.

However, it is the only major garrison outside Roland, and the trade outlet is vital. Quaanser has recruited two mercenary mages to aid defense, one armed with a *ring of orc control*, which has proved very useful against marauders. However, there is tension between the mages, who are arrogant and haughty; the local garrison leader, who is more arrogant and haughty; and the local folk, who are arrogant, haughty, vicious and dishonest.

Corruption is endemic in Gredlen. A third or more of the village's economy is a black economy, with backhanders, extortion, protection rackets, and worse being commonplace. The garrison keeps order over the markets where goods from major trade cities are bought, sold, and bartered. Yet, they receive bribes themselves, so visitors are beginning to learn that Gredlen is a place to avoid. Nonetheless, the village does well. There are no real alternative east-west trade routes, given the dangers of the lands of Rinloru to the north and Medegia to the south. Likewise, the village sees its fair share of mercenaries and adventurers traveling these routes, seeking employ or treasure. Though Gredlen itself is not large, there are many smaller hamlets along the roads which lead from it in all directions, so that within a 10-mile radius or so there are probably an additional 6,000 folk



# The Free Cities

with homes. Trade is now being conducted in these smaller places. They are less well defended against raiders and bandits, but corruption is less, so some merchants take their chances there.

## Smuggler's Walk

This is the major access route to Roland. For three-quarters of its length it is an overground trail through the hills, capable of being traversed by small carts—though wagons find the terrain too rough. For small sections at irregular intervals, the trail descends below the hills through a series of short excavated tunnels. The work here appears dwarven, but the dwarves of the Gull Cliffs have forgotten who built them and why. These tunnels are protected by militia detachments. The longest of them, Coppercavern, is a large natural cavern which has been developed and worked out.

There is even a coaching tavern here, The Smuggler's Lament. Stuffed full of piratical decorations and naval furnishings by its eccentric gnomish owner, the place offers good accommodations, food, and beer, so that many making the trek through the cliffs look forward to a rest along their way.

## Ountsy

Pop. City, 27,000; lands, 43,000  
Ruler: Lady Emmara, Trine of Ountsy  
Cost Multiplier: 140%

Ountsy is a sizeable city which has a traditional rivalry with Rel Astra as a trade port. Historically, the city has been a tied fief of Rel Astra, but it has become effectively independent with Drax's blessing, since he sees no threat from this quarter. Drax is certain his treaties with Ountsy allow him to call upon it in time of war. Ountsy still pays an annual tribute to Rel Astra, so its ruler must be careful of how she behaves to the southern city's despot.

Ountsy's ruler claims little in the way of lands, and most of what she does claim is the Lone Heath, an area where Ountsy's writ does not run far. Emmara is a noblewoman of the House of Garasteth, and she makes sure that her house affiliations are as close as possible. She acceded to rulership of the city some 15 years ago, when her husband died. For a female to assume rulership of such a sizeable city is unusual, especially since she is not of this house by blood; she is a Darmen woman by birth. Cleverly, Emmara renounced affiliation to Darmen and proclaimed her allegiance to the rival house on the day of her husband's death, and this has helped bring about warmer relations with the princes of the House of Garasteth.

Emmara's formal title, The Trine (technically she is also Lord High Mayoress as well), is an ancient one for the despot of Ountsy. It has astrological connotations, and

astrologers and diviners always have been among the advisers to the rulers here. The city's College of Divinations has many of them, wearing traditional blue cloaks lined with red silk and mortar-board hats, which make them look either academically impressive, as they see themselves, or faintly ridiculous—as everyone else sees them.

Such flourishes are unusual. This is a city of legendarily mean and tight-fisted people. Even the priests of non-evil powers charge hefty for their services in the matter of healing, removing curses and the like. Buying any goods in Ountsy is an ordeal, for in addition to high prices the vendor will inspect coinage with an attitude which screams at the buyer that he distrusts him. Vendors tend to count coins at least four times. Asking any Ountsian for directions to such-and-such a place will inevitably draw the reply, "Givvus a Common and I'll tell yer."

Ountsians also have contempt for anything which smacks of art, culture or over-indulged learning. This is inevitably referred to as "bein' like Rauxes," or if faced with someone who is a bard, artist or the like, the rejoinder "yer be from Rauxes then?"

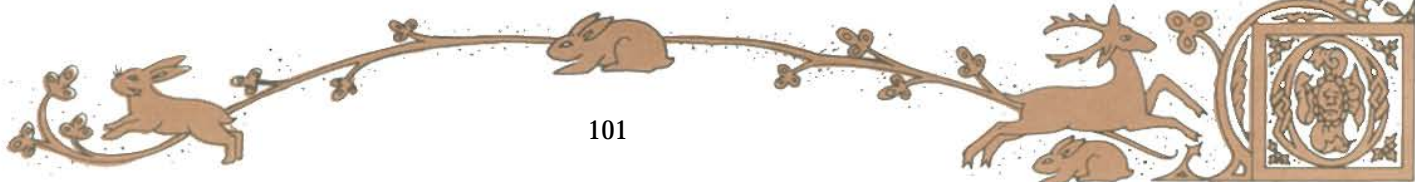
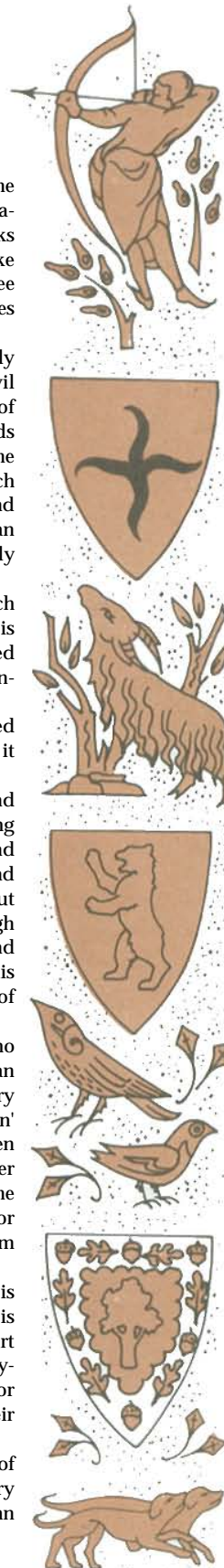
Rauxes is regarded as an ultimate sinkhole of depraved self-indulgence and effete verminous ne'er-do-wells, so it stands in good stead for this kind of comment.

This attitude is both Ountsy's great strength and weakness. Its strength is reflected in the hard working nature of Ountsians and the disciplined defense and protections of the city. Its city walls, aqueducts and sewers protect not just against pirates or invaders but against disease and ill-health. The splendid, though functional, Exchange Markets are well laid-out, and commerce is well regulated. Dishonesty is rare, so this keeps merchants coming back despite the traumas of dealing with Ountsians.

The weakness of this attitude is that Ountsy has no history of scholarship or wizardry. Any child showing an aptitude for such pastimes will earn his parents the query from neighbors, "yer sendin' him to Rauxes for schoolin' then?" Studiousness is usually beaten out of children fairly early on in life. This is even true for the wealthier merchant and artisan classes. In turn, this means that The Trine almost always has imported mercenary wizards, or invited a promising young Garasteth wizard or two from elsewhere.

Thus rulership is compromised, for The Trine is crucially reliant on outsiders in key positions. Emmara is well aware of this, and has made sure that her Court Mage, Svenser, and his group of apprentices have everything they want. That's costly, for wizards have a taste for rare, exotic, and expensive ingredients for their researches. However, Emmara judges that it's worth it.

Otherwise, Emmara has cemented her rulership of Ountsy very effectively. Initially disliked by the military of the city, she has charmed their leader Theodenn





# The Free Cities

Semmer and made sure that they are well-paid. Semmer's title is that of supreme phalangist. Ountsy has a range of odd formal titles for people in important positions; Emmara's city treasurer is known as the grand chancellor and keeper of the rolls, the latter a reference to the way accounts are recorded and stored.

Emmara has one key ally, a priestess of Wee Jas, Celandenn. Celandenn is Lady Warden of the College of Divinations, and her presence is strong and unsettling. She seems able to read the thoughts of any she meets with absolute ease. The cold, formal priestess makes most folk feel certain that The Trine knows everything they are up to, so this helps subdue any possible opposition to Emmara's rule. However, given her careful dealings with the privileged and powerful in her city, she does not need to fear such opposition.

Lastly, though Ountsy is a puritanical and mean city, it has a sprinkling of visitors as all the southeastern port cities and towns do. Dullstranders sometimes trade here, likewise do men from the Darman lands, the Sea Barons, and one or two Hepmonalanders. There is no specific foreign quarter in the city, as there is in Rel Astra. But there are hostleries and dockside taverns which cater mostly to travelers, merchants, and seafarers. Because Ountsy has a reputation as a place where the walls don't have ears, and since Ountsians are so pragmatic and uninterested in anything which smacks of the exotic or intrigue, many of them speak more freely of their travels and events across the lands than they would elsewhere. Adventurers seeking to hire a vessel to travel eastward without this being traced should choose Ountsy as their first port of call.

## Baizel

Baizel is a combination of elements. It is the major southern base for the swift light cavalry of Ountsy which patrols the margins of the Lone Heath. It is also the site of a 120' high lighthouse which acts as a beacon for vessels approaching Rel Astra from the north or Ountsy from the south. There are ragged rocky islets and treacherous reefs in the offshore waters and fairly violent tides and cross-currents also, especially in spring and fall. Finally, the small settlement of 300 villagers gazes in some wonder at the magnificent and luxurious hostelry Emmara has built here in the past two years. She uses this as a base for her diplomats, usually Celandenn, to meet with Drax's representatives. Meeting them on her territory, and pampering them with the luxuries of The Trine's Welcome, gives her an advantage in dealings. And, because those luxurious chambers aren't used by diplomats all the time, some merchants who like to travel in comfort hazard the overland route from Rel Astra to Ountsy in preference to using the hazardous sea route. That trade has been stimulated by this luxurious stopover point and the frequent

cavalry patrols along the road, bringing more money into Ountsy.

## Personalities of the Free Cities

**Celandenn:** 13th-level priestess of Wee Jas (Int 16, Wis 18). AC 7 (*cloak of protection* +3), hp 49, AL LE. Celandenn stands a regal 6', and with her platinum-blond hair and light blue eyes she is a truly striking figure. Nearing her 46th year, the crow's feet and facial lines add gravity to an already imposing appearance. Her black robes offset her cold beauty, and the neckchain of opals, rubies, and silver miniature skulls adds to the sinister power of her personality. She has little Suel blood in her, despite the nature of the power she worships, and she is loyal to Emmara. Celandenn enjoys being a big fish in a pond which isn't so very small, since Ountsy is sizeable. She likes the power she has over others. And she enjoys the freedom she has to develop and work magic with little interference from any annoying Guild of Wizards—she has polite, but wholly uninvolved, relations with Svenser. Since Svenser specializes in abjuration, and Celandenn is most interested in elemental, illusion, and divination magic, their interests overlap little.

Celandenn travels to Farlen regularly to consult the library. Her researches concern pre-Oeridian settlements and peoples in the Flanaess, and she will pay well for books or sources of information about such matters. She has a good library of her own on dark magical artifacts of Aerdy, especially those of alleged Ur-Flan origin. Her home is filled with relics and trinkets from Hepmonaland, and she has visited there several times, though she does not reveal what she learned or observed in that wild and wondrous land.

**Drax The Invulnerable, Lord Protector of Rel Astra:** Animus with abilities of 9th level fighter and 11th level mage (Int 17). AC varies (usually -2 in *plate mail* +5, shield not used, else normal animus AC if ready for spellcasting), hp 64, AL LE. Once but a mayor, though one with great power over Rel Astra, Drax is now the undisputed despot of his city. He is 62 years old, but as an animus he does not have to worry about aging. He is 5' 9", black-haired and green-eyed, an unusual combination for one who is almost pureblood Oeridian. Drax is less afflicted by insanity or instability than many of his kind. He is very rational, calculating, and has a dry, bleak sense of humor. His goal is to slay the overking. He doesn't want to see him overthrown and just destroyed. He wants to rip apart Ivid's body with his own gauntleted hands.

Drax is inclined to long-term strategy. He has heard all about Ivid's disease and claims that the overking must die soon. But he doesn't believe it. "I know that swine. He'll cling to his existence until someone rips the head

# The Free Cities

from his shoulders." So, Drax waits and schemes and builds allies and resources. He doesn't much care who becomes overking after Ivid, so long as it isn't a blood relative of the overking.

For this reason, the House of Darmen has just begun making overtures to Drax, and initial negotiations have gone well. A combined army of Darmen and Rel Astran forces, with Ountsian aid, could present a formidable threat to Rauxes.

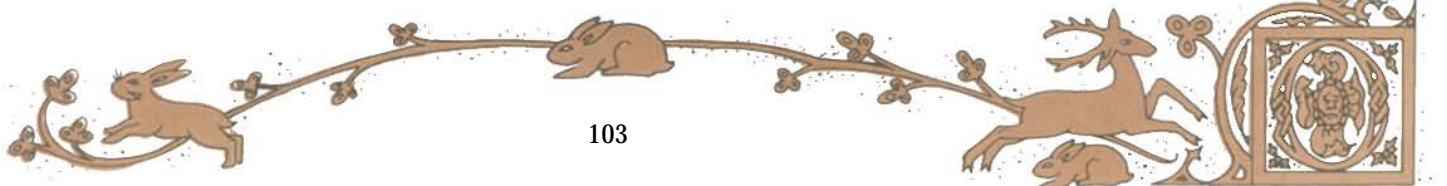
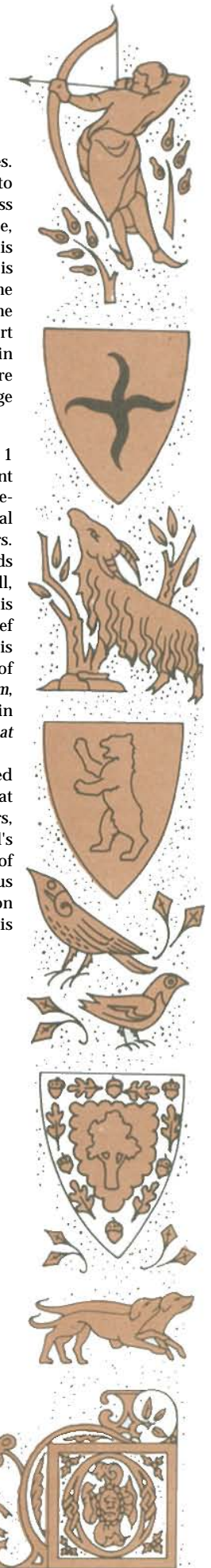
**Emmara, Trine of Ountsy:** 10th-level fighter (Str 17, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 15). AC -1 (silvered *chain mail* +5 with the magical properties of *fire resistance* and *free action*), hp 61, AL NE. Emmara is 39, 5' 9", with honey-blond hair and green-hazel eyes. She is not beautiful, being somewhat overweight and coarsely-featured, but she has an easy familiarity with people and can put others at their ease when she so chooses. Emmara's natural evil is kept in check by her need to balance forces within her own city and keep Drax content with her rulership. However, in private she has little but contempt for most people she knows, and an especially unattractive feature of her personality is a combination of unforgivingness and malice toward those brought low in life by misfortune or calamity. Emmara's one friend is Celandenn, whose evil strikes a chord with Emmara, and whose knowledge of far-flung lands and exotic history makes her an intriguing companion. The two sometimes drink wine long into the night, fantasizing about power and rulership, and what they would like to do to all the many imaginary enemies they believe haunt them.

**Jireen of the Five:** Animus with abilities of 15th-level mage (Int 18). AC -2 (*bracers of defense* AC 2, *ring of protection* +4), hp 47, AL NE. Jireen's insanity has had a severe destabilizing effect. Mute and virtually autistic part of the time, his doppelganger obsession consumes him. He casts the same detection and scrying spells over and over,

trying to find the monster, which of course he never does. Jireen is almost impoverished from hiring mercenaries to track down the doppelganger, and despite his madness his lack of funds is beginning to concern him. Of course, he believes that the doppelganger has stolen much of his gold to stop him hiring people to track it down. Jireen is even beginning to contemplate the sale of some of the magical items he possesses (the DM should determine these to suit his campaign). The goal of a good short adventure should be to try to prevent him doing so—in the case of an innately evil item. An alternative adventure would be getting a good deal of the items the mad mage possesses.

**Marshevel:** 12th-level thief (Dex 18, Int 16). AC 1 (*leather armor* +3), hp 47, AL CE. Posing as a merchant dealing in antiquities, about which he is very knowledgeable, Marshevel is as psychopathic and vile an individual as Midnight Darkness has ever attracted to its numbers. Marshevel is a master poisoner and has killed hundreds during his time in the city. As an ardent reverer of Nerull, he enjoys maximizing casualties. Poisoning food is his speciality. Nerull himself sometimes commands the thief to seek out and slay a special target, and sometimes this is a priest of a rival evil power. A good score of priests of Hextor have fallen foul of Marshevel's *dagger of venom*, and he also has a magical *net of entrapment* to aid him in his work. *Slippers of spider climbing* and a *cloak of the bat* are among his other possessions.

Only 31 years old, small and slim, the brown-haired killer has bright hazel eyes and an appealing grin, so that most think well of him. Among the other preceptors, Jipzinker and Plandarn Reshelfer know Marshevel's identity; Marshevel knows of Plandarn, but not either of the other preceptors. Marshevel keeps a meticulous record of his slayings, and how he carried them out; on the latter score, professional assassins would find his diaries of great interest and would pay well for them.





# The Ruins of Medegia

Pop.: 60,000  
Capital: None (previously Mentrey)  
Ruler: None  
Rulership: Absent  
Cost Multiplier: 200%

This chapter is short, simply because Megedia has effectively vanished from the realm of Oerth. For many years, Medegia existed in a perilous semi-independent manner, with the censor being the chief cleric to the overking. It later established firmer independence from Rauxes while still paying tribute to the imperial capital.

Being close to Rauxes caused a strained relationship. And when war came, Medegia's ruler made a catastrophic error by refusing to send his armies to support the overking. In addition, Osson of Chathold conquered most of Medegia during his extraordinary run-around of southern Aerdy, with Ivid's armies deliberately not coming to the aid of the rebellious Medegia.

Incredibly, Censor Spidasa fled to Rauxes from Osson's victorious armies, where he now enjoys the agonies of the Endless Death.

Osson's armies never returned home, and when they left Medegia Ivid sent in his armies to loot, pillage, and murder in an act of senseless destruction. Ivid saw this as revenge for the lack of support from the small nation, and his men carried out their work thoroughly and with a grim pleasure. The very dregs of armies were employed: the remnants of the Glorioles Army, orcish forces, and even penal legions of convict and slave militias and levies.

Added to this, the rag-tag, brutal army faced little active resistance in Medegia, since so many of the censor's forces had already been overwhelmed by Osson. Among its commanders were two cousins of the overking (subsequently executed for treachery) who were true Naelax men—they dealt with tanar'ri and yugoloths.

Lesser and least fiends and hordlings were used as shock troops to demoralize and terrify the small levies which opposed them, making it easier for the armies to despoil the lands they came to ruin. The strategy failed when they attempted to beseige Rel Astra. However, free fiends still stalk many Medegian lands, with no one to control them.

Medegia is thus a land of absolute anarchy. Its population is decimated. Only the pathetically poor, feeble-minded, aged, infirm, and those too sunk into despair and stricken with terror remain.

Outside of Pontylver, not many fiends stalk the lands. However, there are orcs, deserting soldiers, and ex-mercenaries who have taken to a life of pillaging what they can from this land.

Fields are unsewn with seed and tuber here, and most livestock has long been eaten. Many of those left are close to starvation, and they suffer deficiency diseases (scurvy,

rickets, and the like) as a result. Medegia is grim indeed.

Megedia is not self-contained, however, the rogue elements here threaten the Grandwood and the lands around Nulbish and Torrich. Still the evil forces have learned not to push too close to Rel Astra. The Iron Nation knights there have inflicted heavy casualties on raiders, and the knights use a particularly nasty form of slow quartering for bandits they capture; this encourages others to keep away. There are also several important places, ruins and the like, scattered about this land. And much that has been lost has not been pillaged—and remains to be retrieved.

## Locations and Settlements

### Barrish

There are several villages and small towns marked on the map which are not described in this chapter. These have been left free for the DM to develop. Barrish is one example of how the few remaining settlements manage to get by. The description of Dornelan is another example. Barrish and Dornelan are typical illustrations which the DM can use to fashion other small locations in this remnant of a land.

Barrish is a fishing village of 700 people, with the land owned by a petty princeling of the House of Garasteth. The only defense the city has is a levy with poor discipline and old, often dilapidated arms and equipment. The city was raided by pirates (possibly disguised Duxchan men testing the strength of what is left of Medegia) in Flocktime.

People only remain here because they fear fleeing northward, given what have heard of the marauding bandits of the land. In Barrish, at least, the people have found some strength in numbers. Fishing and some farming brings in enough to eat and get by day-to-day. Simple existence is all most people can see in their future, and staying alive another day is the limit of their ambitions.

As for their ruler, Prince Alaern, the people here could not be more unfortunate. Alaern seeks only to escape—with enough gold and loot to guarantee a comfortable survival in whatever city he comes across. Without any reliable source of information about events in far distant lands, and no magical talents or a court wizard to allow him to escape by *teleportation* or such means, Alaern still doesn't know exactly how he will escape.

He would sell this community to the Scarlet Brotherhood if they guaranteed him safe passage far away. And it is only because they have never sent an emissary here that he hasn't done so. Caring nothing for his people, Alaern is as craven and despicable as one can imagine, and he imposes brutal punishments and ruinous tithes

and taxes on his people.

### Dornelan

Dornelan is a village of 850 people occupied by remnants of the Glorioles Army and subjected to military rule with nighttime curfews. The army here numbers some 200 infantry and 40 varied (and poorly shod and barded) cavalry. They remain here only because the surrounding land is fertile and the village has enough food to support them. These army deserters fear that some imperial force will turn up and have them executed for desertion.

Since they have no way of knowing the overking is in no position to do this—and would hardly bother with somewhere so small anyway—they are constantly afraid, always watching the roadways to make sure no army is approaching.

Dornelan spells trouble, for the cavalry here raids across the river using the fords to the west to enter the Darmen lands, usually looting farmsteads. They seek good horses and whatever saddles and equestrian equipment they can get, for their own steeds are aging and in relatively poor condition. This is as yet but an irritant, but the cavalry is growing in arrogance and the frequency of its raids increases. They are inviting a determined strike against them by the princes of Darmen across the border.

### Mentrey

After the crushing of Pontylver, Mentrey was the next city of Medegia to be crushed by soldiers. Only a fifth of its original 16,000 people are left alive. The soldiers who sacked this city were predominantly orcish, and the cruelty with which they put commonfolk to the sword appalled even their evil human leaders.

Mentrey is now a city divided into occupied zones, east and west, by two armed groups who regularly skirmish in the city center. One group is a faction of Euroz orcs led by a one-armed orog said to be as strong as a cloud giant. The other is a force of around 800 mercenaries, bandits, and army deserters with no effective leadership. In truth, the humans lose as many men in drunken brawls and slayings as they do to the orcs they outnumber here.

City folk still mostly side with the humans, of course, but the orcs have enslaved the people in the areas they occupy and force them to construct barricades.

Mentrey had some warning of its fate after the fall of Pontylver, so many escaped in time. Learned men, of whom the city held many, were able to depart with many of their most treasured tomes and works. However, because of unusually high rainfall which made carts and wagons unable to travel the muddied roads heading northwest, much had to be left behind. There is many a private library, collection of art pieces, or even some magical items stashed away in some sealed-off cellar or basement which the raiders have not yet found. And

## The Ruins of Medegia

there are many exiles who would pay well for the retrieval and return of the items.

Since this city was once the capital of Medegia, there is much in the way of hidden documents and archives of information, not to mention some of the contents of the city treasury which may yet be unlooted.

### Montesser

This is an extraordinary place. There are 600 or so orcs permanently encamped by the sea. That's not so unusual, but the fact that they are building their own wooden huts using materials from razed villages nearby is surprising.

The orcs have sewn crops (very haphazardly, admittedly) and have two fishing boats which have, despite all the odds, not yet sunk. The orcs even keep a few goats taken from deserted villages, and have a startling pride in them. They have been heard to compare the merits of different cheeses made from each individual nanny goat.

To top off this bizarre picture, the community is matriarchal, led by a priestess of Luthic who espouses the virtues of domesticity and nurturing, at least in the forms of growing food and protecting the young.

These orcs simply tired of war. Orcs are mostly warlike, to be sure, but a lifetime of being kicked around by other, more powerful, orcs got to be wearying. They deserted their brethren in Mentrey and settled here. Their alignment may be considered as verging on Lawful Neutral, since the society is well-organized, but the traditional evil streak is shown up in the harshness with which disputes are settled and other social practices.

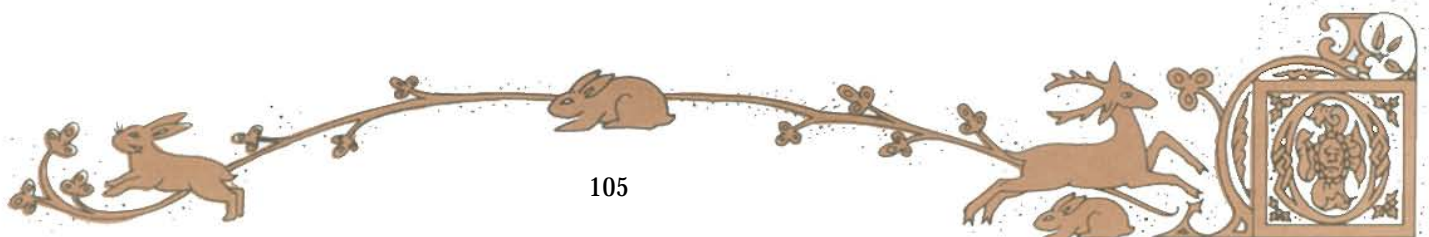
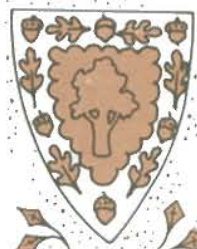
These orcs are not weaklings. They patrol the perimeters of their camp and the shoreline, and they are ready to rise up at a moment's notice to strike down any seek to take away what little they have. They have a fierce pride in their little settlement.

Recently a Sea Barons vessel was blown off course and sighted the camp; an initial attempt to loot it was swiftly fought off by the well-drilled orcs, and the captain of the Asperdi vessel was sufficiently impressed to make peace with them. Now, the Sea Barons ship goods here, as the orcs desperately want better weapons and armor to defend themselves and tools to work their gardens. In exchange for the goods, the orcs provide foodstuffs and information about events in Medegia. The captain of the Asperdi vessel is always interested, given his trading with cities north of this troubled land and his periodic raiding of Medegian coastal towns and villages.

Since orcs are fecund, this settlement will grow unless it is wiped out by the mercenaries roaming the land. Should this happen, Oerth may find its first above-ground "civilized" orcish city.

### Pontylver

Before the wars, Pontylver was a great city of some 30,000





# The Ruins of Medegia

people. Secure behind its city walls, built to protect it against piratical raids from Duxchan, it seemed a bastion of calm, culture, and learning.

During the wars, Osson bypassed Pontylver. A diviner among his retinue informed him that the city rulers would not come to the holy censor's aid if Osson ventured further into Medegia. The advice was correct.

Pontylver saw itself as a free city, and Spidasa as being too bound to Rauxes. Having failed to take Nulbish, Osson was ready to accept his diviner's advice—and he was surely right to do so.

However, Pontylver was the first Medegian city to fall to the imperial troops when the soldiers came to raze Medegia. This was for three reasons. First, Ivid's armies were at the start of their Medegian campaign, and they still had enough discipline and strength to assault the city. Second, from Spidasa Ivid had learned almost everything about Pontylver's defenses and defenders. Finally, this is the city where Naelax military leaders used fiends to greatest effect.

Pacts agreed with greater tanar'ri for this one crucial campaign of conquest brought forth vrock, hezrou, and chasme to spread death, terror, disease, and weakness to the defenders of the city. Not even Pontylver's mages could defend it against the combination of fiends and the magic of priests of Hextor. And, while imperial casualties were not light, the city fell in the early summer of 584 CY.

The sack of this city was the most complete and brutal anywhere, not least to send a message to other towns and cities in Medegia which would demoralize their armies. Destructive spells of fire, lightning, and acid were used to strike down the city walls and virtually every building of any size behind them. Transformational spells such as *rock to mud* were used to bring down the city itself. Of the inhabitants, nearly 90% were slain or carried off to the Abyss by tanar'ri.

Now, Pontylver is a nightmare city, only Chathold equalling the horrors here. The people who remain are mad, autistically depressed, or even animated as zombies. The city is stalked by 50 or more fiends of varying levels of power who prey on whoever they find. There are also considerable numbers of deserters, bandits, and orcs who seem consumed by a blood craze inspired by the mass slaughters they inflicted on the city. Horribly, there are several places in the city where great mounds of skeletons or decomposing bodies lie, and vermin, undead, and disease are rife.

Even the temple of Pyremius was sacked, and a thousand souls were crammed into the building which was then razed with fire so that only blackened stone and charred remnants of bodies remain. Even the Abyss itself has few sights as ghastly as this dreadful place.

The horrors of Pontylver impress themselves on any who enter it. The awful sights of the city, and the wretched ghosts who infest some of the sites of massacre,

are bad enough.

However, the minds of those who venture here become obsessed by the carnage. Growing homicidal mania, delusional insanity, and worse have afflicted those who have visited even briefly, growing stronger over the months after they leave. Even spells as powerful as *heal* or *remove curse* seem only to delay the onset or development of these mental symptoms.

Thus, those entering this ruined place take more than their lives into their hands; their very souls may be lost in this citadel of holocaust. Yet, still people come. Some are those so ineffably evil that they seek to despoil the treasures undoubtedly left in temples, caring not for what may afflict them. Others come to fight with the bandits or orcs of the cities. Some are commanded by fiends to serve them here, though the purposes of the tanar'ri who remain are inscrutable.

Others, however, have a foolhardy bravery which overcomes their natural sense of caution. Pontylver was noted for its cathedral and scriptorium of Wee Jas, and the slain priests and priest-mages of that power had much magic. By no means could all of their wealth and magical items have been taken from the city. Any who come to seek the treasures must face all the hazards already mentioned—and the perils of crumbling and unsafe buildings and many magical traps.

## The Walker

Only one personality is described in this chapter, but he is an extraordinary individual and his purpose in Medegia remains unknown.

Oeridian legends concerning The Walker have existed since before the Great Kingdom came into being. He is always described as a man who appears physically very young, perhaps but 15 or 16 years of age, though great age is attributed to him and a perceptive viewer can see that he has tiny lines on his forehead and around his eyes which belie the appearance of youth. The truth is that he has always existed and always will, though in what form, perhaps even he does not know.

He can be recognized by the small sack tied to a stick which he carries over his shoulder, and the small and nondescript dog which always accompanies him.

The Walker is often said to be a being verging on demipower status, perhaps a human who is undergoing divine ascension and in the last stages of a sublime enlightenment. Some say he is an aspect of Fharlanghn, but this is surely only a partial truth at best.

He is one of Johydee's Children. His sack is small, and contains only small trinkets or beads which seem to be of little value, but which are potentially magical and unique in kind. The Walker always shuns human company, though he is polite enough to any whom he meets on the road. He speaks very little and then always in riddles. But he is

# The Ruins of Medegia

unfailingly good-humored and never shows anger nor gives offense to any he meets.

One of The Walker's traits is that he cannot be attacked effectively by magical or mundane means. Either he simply vanishes, or with a wave of his hand he can *dispel magic* or turn any weapon used against him into a harmless object, perhaps but a thin stick or stave which the holder finds impossible to raise against him. He never attacks in reply.

The Walker travels at normal speed (MV 12) but he never tires, and he can cross any terrain without penalties. He is normally a land traveler, though he can walk on water at will. Oddly enough, his little dog cannot, so The Walker carries him across water.

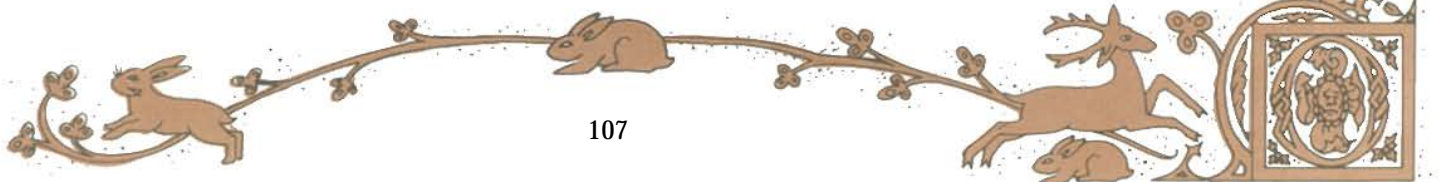
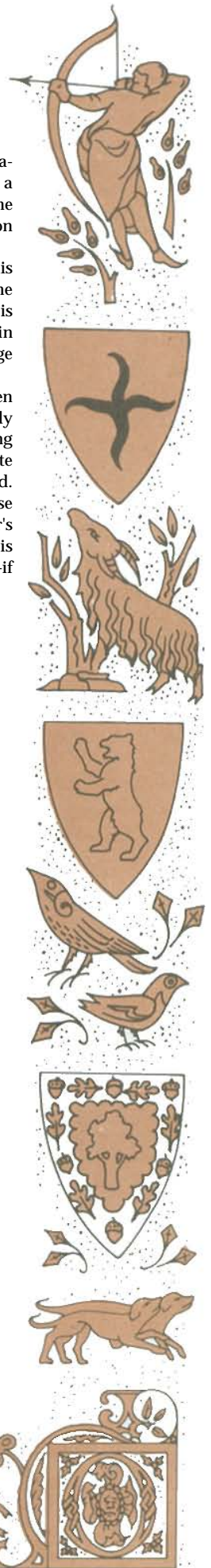
The Walker is enigmatic. No one knows who he is, or where he comes from, or where he is going. He seems to be undergoing some endless journey.

The Walker is a mystery, and the sightings of him in Medegia would be nothing more than the retelling of an old myth if it were not for the fact that his travels have left behind him a growing and developing trail of magical force.

*Detect magic* shows a faint line of abjuration and alteration magics in the trails left behind by The Walker, and a particularly skilled decoder of cyphers might see that The Walker is building up a spider's web pattern centered on Mentrey on his recent travels.

Leaving behind such detectable evidence of his journeys never has been part of the mythology of The Walker. Why this change has suddenly taken place is unknown. It might reflect some internal development in The Walker's own psyche, or it might reflect some change in Medegia itself.

Certainly, one startling physical change which has been observed only very recently is that tall, stark, utterly smooth stone monoliths 12' or so in height have sprung up at nexal points in the web pattern, and these radiate the same pattern as the trail The Walker has left behind. Wholly impervious to physical or magical damage, these silent stones stand as physical evidence of The Walker's passage through the world, and the magic they radiate is stronger than that of the trails. Again, their purpose—if they have one—is unknown.





# The Grandwood and the Lone Heath

These two great tracts of land have traditionally been safe havens for the folk of Aerdy who are opposed to the overking and those who served him. If anything, the prospects for the people here have improved as a result of the wars, for there is not the organized, overwhelming imperial power to crush them.

The peoples of the forest and heath are coming to terms with their position. Nearby rulers such as Drax in Rel Astra may be evil, but they and their people loathe the overking as much as the good peoples do. So the men and women of the Grandwood and Lone Heath are contemplating allying or negotiating with the nearby rulers.

The Grandwood and Lone Heath also have demihuman communities, giving them a quite different social picture to that found in the main continental lands. Especially in the Lone Heath, these communities are unusual and specialized, making them more colorful than most of their kind.

In these lands, the struggle for the good fight can be fought by those who oppose the evil rulers of the lands around. Here is a haven for PCs wanting a base of operations where friends and good comrades can be found and trusted.

## The Grandwood

Pop.: 30,000 (plus 9,000 demihumans)

Capital: None

Ruler: Not applicable

Rulership: Variable discipline and organization

Cost Multiplier: 160%

The Grandwood has been a haven, historically, for renegades both good and bad. While Medegia claimed the forest south of the Mikar, the remainder was the overking's fief. However, the natural defenses of the Grandwood, with its central areas of dense forest, prevented imperial troops from raiding into its heart. The western third of the forest was relatively uninhabited because of those troops, but the forest folk learned to be cunning. A typical trick was to dress in the clothes of slain imperial troops to ambush others of the same ilk who came raiding later.

Unfortunately, as a response to this the overking used orc troops to raid the Grandwood, and because of their familiarity with it, many deserting orc troops filtered back into the forest.

Grandwood folk make their living from the forest itself, since that yields most of what they need. Weapons such as staves, bows, and spears are made from the variety of trees available. However, superior weapons such as swords and metal armor could not be usually had, save poor or mediocre quality equipment taken from killed imperials.

There is but one ore vein below the forest, tapped by

the gnomes of Gaborren's Rift. But this yields gold and is useless for weapons. Many consider that gold should be used to get the weapons they need. Hence, the Grandwood men could certainly benefit from trade, just as cities like Rel Astra or Ountsy could certainly use the wood and food the forest offered. Such trade agreements would keep Drax from raiding the forest to get what his people need. This leaves Drax, who intends to march on Rauxes, free to use his troops in that endeavor.

Grandwood folk are unsurprisingly divided on whether they should trade with Rel Astra. It would offer them other benefits, such as peace, and with orcs raiding into the forest that would be welcome. However, many do not trust Drax; many years of fighting off Medegian and Rel Astran raiders make them suspicious.

Others object on moral grounds; Drax is still an evil despot, and it is wrong to trade with him. Still others reply that Grandwood food would go to feed the ordinary folk of Rel Astra, and that such trade would not be morally wrong since it would mostly benefit those commonfolk. The debates are endless.

The people of the Lone Heath add another dimension to the trade question. There are ties between the communities, especially between rangers and the druidic priests of Obad-Hai. The Lone Heath folk are almost all implacably opposed to the despots of the east and continue to raid and strike at their merchant caravans along the Iron Road and elsewhere.

In a first meeting with Grandwood folk, Drax's representative pointed out that the Grandwooders and the Heathfolk were allies, and surely the Grandwood people could prevail upon the Heathmen not to attack Rel Astran merchants? The request was reasonable, but the Grandwooders could not comply.

How all this will turn out is uncertain. If Drax should march on Rauxes and become overking, then the Grandwood people would be his implacable enemies and trade would be impossible. Some have, indeed, foreseen this possibility. But only Istus knows who will ascend the malachite throne, so the deliberations continue.

## Woodsmen and Foresters

The majority of these people make a living and have communities just like others in the Adri Forest. One important difference, however, is the distribution of character classes among the forest men. Many of them are thieves, mages, and priests who fled from powerful rulers. This is unusual among Adri foresters.

About three percent of Grandwood adults are non-fighters, with levels determined by the DM as suits his campaign (but there are no renegade high patriarchs or archmages here).

Likewise, weaponry and equipment possessed by these men is similar to those of the Adri, except for exceptional

# The Grandwood and the Lone Heath

characters who will often have brought their own special weapons and equipment with them, or perhaps some second-generation woodsmen who have inherited them from parents.

A majority of the woodsmen are of Good (45%) or Neutral (35%) alignments. The remainder are considered to be evil renegades, and the two groups have different patterns of organization.

Non-evil woodsmen tend to have lived in the woods for longer, and many more have actually been born here. They have better-defended homesteads, a few walled hamlets, and have good morale. The evil refugees are nomadic and forage to get by. They make only temporary camps for a few weeks or months at best and then move on.

Non-evil woodsmen do not have any overall leadership. Each community has its own elected spokesman. However, there is a secret conclave of such spokesmen held at the fortified site of Rivenwen every festival week, and here the communities try to organize their patrols, discuss matters which affect all of them, and (in the case of groups dominated by Lawful alignments) tend to share and barter resources and bounties which have come their way. No one commands anyone else; most communities are actually more concerned with cooperating with the demihumans, druids, priests, and rangers in their areas. Thus, cooperation between communities across the forest is relatively loose and informal. The rangers are the most important communication resource; they are the grapevine which spreads information across the forest. If a special conclave is needed, they are the ones who spread the word.

## Bandits, Raiders and Menaces

These come in various shapes and sizes: evil renegades, deserting orcish and human troops, and army forces sent to raid the forest who have become less important since Drax has opted for a more conciliatory approach to the forest folk. Too, there are the humanoid of the forest itself, among whom orcs are the major menace (with some 600 gnolls being an equally important problem on the rare occasions when they organize effectively into a raiding party). By and large, these menaces have declined somewhat. The most threatened forest area is now the south, not the west, because of evil things slipping into the forest from Medegia. Even one or two fiends have been sighted on the southern forest margins, which has caused great alarm to the people living there.

These concerned individuals are among those who most desperately press for trade with Rel Astra, since woodsmen's weapons will not long keep fiends at bay. They may go their own way, and trade with Drax even if others disapprove.

The native forest orcs, a sub-tribe of the Euroz who call

themselves the Eurork, have no love for those of their kind who have defected to the service of Aerdry rulers.

Priests of Gruumsh have pronounced heresy on them, and battles between orc residents and intruders are commonplace. The Eurork are more cunning than most orcs, with many shamans who have scouting and forest camouflage skills, so that their ambushes are more dangerous than those of most of their kind. Their blowpipemen are known to use paralyzing poisons when dealing with humans or elves. And the best way of dealing with them, if they're believed to be in the vicinity, is to taunt or anger them so that they lose their self-control and attack on the rampage, eschewing ambush and skirmish strategies.

## Wood Elves

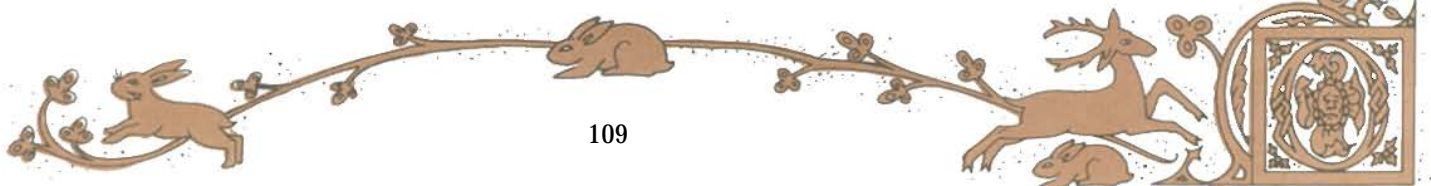
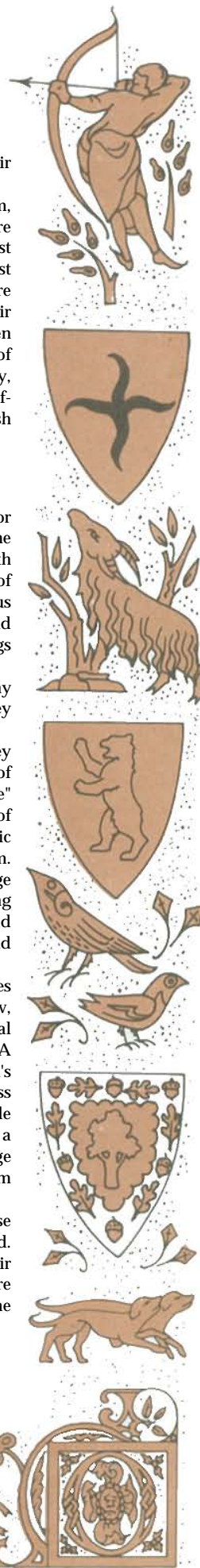
The Grandwood is home to 7,000 elves, of whom 700 or so are grugach. The grugach live in and around the central densest forest, and they have few dealings with any other forest people. However, a cabal of fighter/mages among them has infrequent and cautious meetings with the moonmages of the wild elves, and these gatherings at least help to avoid misunderstandings with other forest people.

Woodsmen know to leave the grugach well alone. Any bandits or evil people who come this way, which they rarely do, do not usually return.

The other elves of the forest are unusual in that they have no clan divisions. Lacking much in the way of contact with other elves, they use the term "The People" to refer to themselves, and they have a strong sense of community. Neutral Good, rather than the usual Chaotic Good, is the most common alignment among them. Seniority and rank among the elves is determined by age and artistic talent. Thus, even a powerful mage among the elves will politely defer to the wisdom of an old matriarch or young sculptor in elven meetings and discussions.

This sense of being a people unto themselves applies even to those magically skilled individuals who know, through their communing with elven powers or magical travel to other lands, that they are not, of course, alone. A paradoxical sense of unity with the rest of Corellon's creation and a heightened sense of their own separateness go together for these elves. It is a paradox they have little desire to explain to anyone else, since they regard it as a matter of racial metaphysics (the lofty kind of verbiage they would use in discussing it) which concerns them alone.

To deepen the paradox, the elves have a sincere sense of oneness with the other peoples of the Grandwood. They care for the fates of every non-evil person in their forest home. The forest halflings are the people they are emotionally closest to. The elves are very protective of the





# The Grandwood and the Lone Heath

small folk, while at the same time respecting and being delighted by the undoubted toughness and resourcefulness of the hardy halflings. The elves don't patronize anyone.

The elven tree archers are among the forest's best and most deadly defenders. But above all, the moonmages are the heart of the elven will to survive. Reverers of the power Sehanine, the majority are specialist illusionists who use spells such as *hallucinatory terrain* and *massmorph* to devastating effect in entrapping troops raiding the woods. Saving throws against these spells, when applicable, are made with a -2 penalty if cast by a moonmage.

However, there is much more to these gray-clad wizards than ingenious illusions. They are the repository of knowledge, magical and historical, of the elves. They do not record their wisdom and learning in books but, rather, in a unique symbiotic arrangement with old treants of the forest. A moonmage communes for days with his partnered treant, sleeping and dreaming in its branches. As the elf does, he relives his history and communicates his own being, and all he has learned, to the treant. When a young moonmage is ready to gain an experience level, he comes to the treant and communes with it in the same way. Then, some of his elder's learning and wisdom passes to him, and so does something of the older mage's being, which strengthens the young elf's sense of community and identity with his fellows.

The treants learn much of life beyond the forest in this way, though they find much of it only mildly interesting. The uniquely elven nature of understanding life and wisdom is not something the treant consciously apprehends. When the treant itself grows old, and comes to its time of endless slumbering, it will call to the moonmages and ask to pass on all it has learned from them to a mature treant who will take on its role as a keeper of understandings. Non-elves cannot acquire knowledge from the treants, and magical mind-reading or controlling spells will not yield up what the treant has stored.

For all this, the Grandwood elves should not be considered some transcendently-absorbed variety of unworldly creature. Any moonmage worth his salt can discuss the finer points of flight arrow design with the master fletchers or longbow users of his race. The Grandwood elves are among the most powerful, resilient, and aware of any on Oerth, and perhaps the strongest defenders of all that is good and true there.

## Halflings and Gnomes

The 1,000 or so forest halflings are tough, burrow-dwelling folk, a mix of halfling types. They are skilled at concealing themselves in the forest (having a base chance for hiding in woodlands, as a ranger can, of 15% + 5% per level if applicable). They use short spears, short bows, and throwing knives to great effect. Excellent preparers of

pit traps and weighted net traps cunningly camouflaged with leaves from the trees, they know how to defend themselves and their communities. They are avoided by any forest raiders who know what they are doing. It would be easier to assault a palisaded hamlet of a hundred woodsmen than to try to dig 20 halflings out of a burrow complex.

The halflings cooperate best with the wood elves, gnomes, and rangers of the Grandwood, though their basic attitude to any woodsman is peaceable. They readily form alliances with woodsmen who have lived in the Grandwood for many years or who were born there. The halflings are not much interested in events outside the woods, since they are quite self-sufficient. However, from time to time one unusually curious and ambitious young halfling thief will sneak off to the wicked world beyond to seek fortune and fame.

Grandwood halflings are tough. They are not cute little folk, and they loathe being patronized. They have excellent forestry and foraging skills. If the DM possesses the *Complete Book of Gnomes and Halflings*, he may consider customizing the forestwalker kit for developing halfling NPCs here.

The forest gnomes are detailed in the entry for Gaborren's Rift below.

## Rangers

Grandwood rangers tend to stay in certain sections of the forest and patrol them, protecting the local settlements of woodsmen and others. It is a matter of pride to a ranger to know every inch of his home like the creases on his hand. Such rangers will even have names for individual forest creatures of any size, such as badgers or foxes, and they have an unerring sense of any changes to their local area.

It is effectively impossible for anyone to cross their lands without their knowing it. A successful Wisdom check even allows the rangers to detect the passage of a druid who has used a *pass without trace* spell to cross their terrain.

Thus, the relationship of a ranger to his community is almost like that of a village constable or sergeant-at-arms to the folk therein. They are localized protectors and warners, guardians above all else.

Of course, this is not universally true. Chaotic rangers journey beyond the boundaries of the forest—often to the Lone Heath—and travel widely within it, spreading the latest news, information, and gossip. If the need arises for identification of themselves to each other or some uncertain group of woodsmen they haven't met before, the rangers use a signalling system of coordinated hand gestures and eye movements; a fraternal handshake with the small finger crooked into the palm of the hand when both parties feel secure enough to approach more closely.

# The Grandwood and the Lone Heath

They do not have a marking system of terrain as the Gnarley rangers do, for they don't need one given the knowledge rangers have of their home area.

The Grandwood rangers have no hierarchy, but there is one among them who they universally respect. Fiorena Goldhand wanders widely through the Grandwood and seems always to have knowledge of what is going on in places such as Rel Astra, Ountsy, and even Rauxes itself. Fiorena's consort ranger, who is known simply by the name Auruma, is a quiet and silent type, but one clearly possessed of great strength. One woodsman fleeing from orcs who accidentally ran into Auruma's back described it as feeling like running into a rock. The ranger didn't budge an inch.

Fiorena and Auruma have a special affinity with the wood elves and in matters of grave import; these two will meet with the Moonmages to discuss what must be done. This happens if some major menace should arise, such as a large warband entering the Grandwood or, most recently, to discuss the incursions of fiends into the southern woodland. These two rangers are currently thought to be in the southern woodland, seeking to destroy those invaders. On the basis of those discussions, Fiorena lets other rangers know what should be done by the forest defenders; she only suggests and seeks to persuade, not to order. However, her advice is almost always obeyed.

## Druids and Priests

There is no major, dominant ethos or priesthood within the Grandwood. Among the druids there is the all-too-frequent animosity between the more seclusive, but well-informed and knowledgeable, druids of Obad-hai. They wander as they will, while the druids of Ehlonna tend to stay closer to areas with higher density of human habitations. What is unusual about the Grandwood is that there are tiny, scattered handfuls of priests of many good faiths, such as those of Atroa and even Berei (among those with a generous portion of Flan blood in their veins).

Most cabins or huts will have a little family icon or statuette of a power, to which food or flowers may be offered, or candles burned, as appropriate. There is a quiet religious feeling among most folk which they do not impress on outsiders. Interestingly, it is not the more obviously martial and protective powers such as Hei-ro-neous or St. Cuthbert which most folk revere. Rather, the quieter and gentler paths of Atroa, Ehlonna, Berei, and Pelor find most favor here.

Beory's faith is also one which almost all the common folk offer tokens in to spring and at the first fall of leaves in the autumnal months.

The relatively few priests here tend to be wanderers and itinerants who move from place to place, giving healing, consecrations at births and marriages, offering

funeral rites, and performing small services in return for a bed for the night and warm food. The one truly powerful priestess of the forest is Taralene of Atroa, who is almost regarded as a saintly figure by Grandwooders. To have a newborn infant named and blessed by her is a regarded as a great good fortune. The priestess has her home at the Bellfields, described below.

## Locations and Settlements

### Bellfields

In the heart of the forest stands this lushly-grassed meadowlike clearing some 200 yards in diameter, with a stout wooden cabin standing in its center. The place is well-named, for the arrival of spring is heralded by a sudden eruption of a solid carpet of azure bluebells which seem almost to spring up in full flower overnight. The entire area has an *antipathy* spell for all evil-aligned creatures operating upon it and for some 100 yards in all directions beyond it.

Bellfields is the home of Taralene and her three juniors, one a priest of no mean attainments himself (a 10th-level priest). Those who know Bellfields know that an owl hoot is the way to call one of Atroa's priests from their home. Any other signal usually rouses the two huge wolfhounds here (treat as 7+7 HD worgs), who growl and snarl at the visitors.

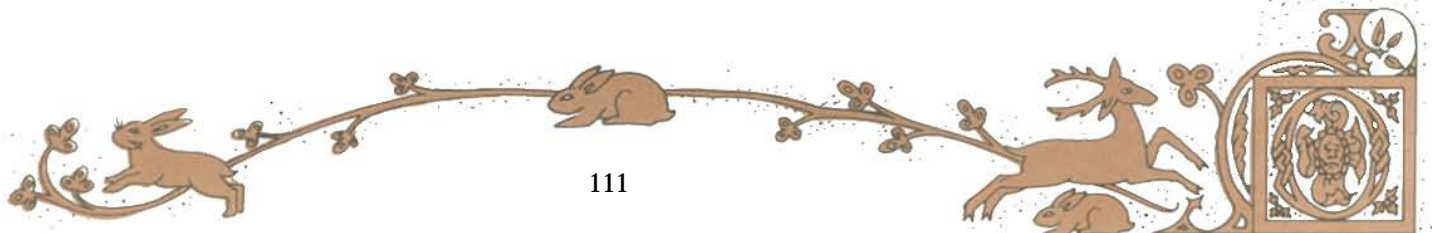
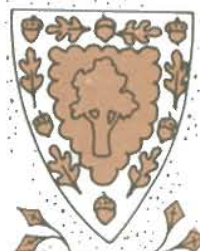
Bellfields radiates strong healing magic. Injured and diseased natural animals (not monsters, people, or demihumans) which enter the area fall into a deep sleep. When they awaken their wounds or illness is healed, unless the injury is very severe in which case they pass peacefully from the world, without pain. The forest creatures seem to know this, for some will travel many miles, even if badly hurt, to get here.

Because they know of this magic, a group of brownies has travelled from the heart of the forest to watch over Bellfields and they have spread the word around. They even kidnapped a kilmoulis, brought it struggling here in a sack, and told it in no uncertain terms that this was its new home and it had better serve Taralene well. Initially resentful, the little creature now scarcely believes its luck.

Pegasi, unicorns, and other such rare and magical creatures visit here from time to time, and the ubiquitous cranes on their way to fish the Mikar are not the only reason Gwydiesin stops here from time to time. Taralene is not a warrior-priest, and she has no real dealings with rangers or elves who play martial roles. But her quiet passage through the world and the hearts of men is very much part of the defense of the Grandwood.

### Gaborren's Rift

This deep mine is home to virtually all the 700 gnomes of the Grandwood. The mine yields up gold, which the





# The Grandwood and the Lone Heath



gnomes trade mostly to the wood elves who use it for making jewelry and statuary. In return, the gnomes receive food, crafted items, and even a magical item or two. Sometimes, a widely-traveling moonmage may use *teleportation* to take the gold farther to trade. The gnomes here are miners, so they are regarded as rock gnomes, not forest gnomes, even though they are forest dwellers.

The gnomes have the perimeter of their mine very well guarded indeed. Deadfalls and other traps are just the obvious part, but the gnomes also have seven trained horned iguanas as guards; a rush attack from one of these beasts can inflict severe damage. With *improved invisibility* cast on them, the iguanas make formidable allies. The gnomes also use their own specialized type of hand catapult. It is treated as sling, but the gnomes are +1 to hit with this weapon, and they do not just fire stones from them. The gnomes have learned to manufacture poisonous and choking concoctions from leaf and plant molds that are contained in small glass spheres which break on impact. The effects are diverse, but can vary from Class B poison (inhaled rather than injected) to the severity of *dust of sneezing and choking* (a +2 bonus is permitted to the saving throw, however, since this is a biological and not a magical attack).

The clannish rift gnomes are wary of any visitors other than wood elves. They don't deal much with the humans, and they tend to send even native woodsmen packing if one of their spies spots a woodsman approaching too closely. The gnomes do have a gold mine here, after all.

The one exception to their relative insularity is if any sizeable number of orcs approaches within even a score of miles. The gnomes have a unique myth about Garl Glittergold, one of the very few in which he is combative, when faced with the brutishness of Gruumsh. So they especially loathe orcs. A gnome warband—and this is a rare sight—will always emerge from the mines, its leaders riding the biggest of the iguanas, to sally forth and attack the orcs. The orcs have not yet won.

If the gnomes come across any hidden pockets of buried and secret evils within their mines, they aren't saying. They keep to themselves, and visitors had better be something special to be invited to meet with the clan elders.

## Spikerift

Hidden away in the deepest forest, Spikerift is a deep natural depression in the forest floor descending some 150 feet to a water-filled rocky crater from which many small caverns and passageways lead, the entry to most of them being submerged. The vegetation is dominated by sharp-leaved grasses and long-thorned bushes, so that skin can be left badly bleeding and leather or clothing severely torn simply by trying to get through the tangle of undergrowth.

The water in the lakelet is inky black and bitterly cold even at the height of summer. Animal life is sparse, although from time to time great bubbles burst to the surface of the water, suggesting that something large is living at the bottom. Great eel-like creatures have been seen slithering into the cave entrances, and at nights a silky phosphorescence has been seen at the entrance to some cave mouths.

There are many wild rumors about Spikerift and the monsters, magic and evil which lurk in the submerged caves. Even elves and rangers avoid the caves, fearing they might awaken a slumbering evil. The most persistent rumor is that a priest of Nerull has been placed in *temporal stasis* by rival priests of Hextor. As part of the powerful wards which bind him into that state, a potent good-aligned magical artifact had to be used to neutralize the evil magic which some might attempt to use to awaken the priest. Taking the artifact, variously described as a stave or crook, would free the priest. Any attempting to retrieve it had best be sure they could deal with an enraged and powerful priest of the Reaper, else their meddling would bring a terrible new danger to the Grandwood.

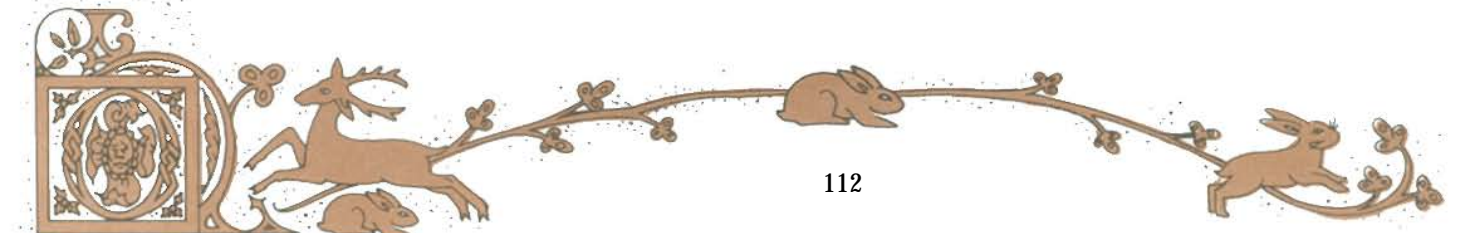
## Tormengrend

Tormengrend is described here as a typical larger settlement of woodsfolk; others of similar size certainly exist, but have relatively little to distinguish them from this place.

Wooden palisade walls with sharpened tips protect the hamlet, which has 28 wooden cabins and 117 people living within. Three rangers (of 2nd, 3rd and 5th level) guard an area of some 100 square miles centered on the settlement. Further guarding comes in the form of concealed pits dug around the hamlet, which have spiked spear traps set within them. Because of these, children are never allowed to leave the hamlet to play unescorted. Only when a child has his coming of age at 14 and shows that he has memorized exactly where every pit is can he leave alone. Even then, that's rare; foraging, trapping or taking fungi, berries, tubers, elderberries and the like is done by small groups of people.

Tormengrend is unusually fortunate in that it has a resident 1st-level priest of Atroa with the herbalism proficiency, able to cure wounds and make poultices and nonmagical potions for all kinds of ailments. The mustard foot baths and inhalations for the colds of winter are the most widely used. She can also extract rotted teeth swiftly and efficiently, and that's no little blessing for such humble forest people.

The hamlet also has a prized armory—a half-dozen elven longbows brought by wood elf visitors one Brewfest and two longswords brought by the oldest of the rangers from a skirmish with imperial deserters.



# The Grandwood and the Lone Heath

These supplement the staves, spears, and crossbows the villagers have, with the best of the foragers having heavy hunting and skinning knives as well.

This is a humble place. Tormengrend, and anywhere like it, is a good setting to give PCs who take much for granted a reminder of the wrinkles of everyday real life in the Grandwood.

## The Lone Heath

The Lone Heath is a mix of heathland and marshland. Marshland areas are more watery, tend to be on the margins of the Mikar and around its headwaters, and have fairly abundant tall grass. Reed and willow growths provide excellent cover and camouflage, though taller trees do not grow in abundance on the very wet soil. The heathland areas are drier and rockier, with poor soil, and have growths of heather and bracken-like plants, and tough-leaved members of various families of fern, together with scrub bush growth and a few copses of stunted trees.

Though the place is referred to as the Lone Heath, it is the marshland areas which provide the best homes for its occupants, since camouflage is better and hunting, foraging, and trapping tend to be better rewarded. And, of course, both marsh and river have good fish and bird reserves.

The Lone Heath has no tracks nor trails. Nor does it have any permanent settlements of any size. Most of the inhabitants are nomadic and make temporary camps. This continual wandering was once to avoid any imperial forces hunting the people here. But even for those without generations of tribesman ancestry behind them, it has become a way of life.

Unlike the Grandwood, the Lone Heath has virtually no evil humanoids, bandits, or refugees permanently living within its confines. This is because the indigenous peoples appear to be able to sniff out such intruders and drive them off without any offer of peace or quarter. But there is more to this lack of evil than that vigilance, and perhaps Gywdiesin is the key to that.

The folk here will have no truck with any evil ruler beyond their homelands. Virtually all of them have family tales of suffering and torment inflicted by the evil nobility and rulers of Aerdi. And they will not deal with them now, even if it should benefit them in some ways to do so. To them, one does not deal with one's persecutors simply because it suits those men to be cooperative now. The cooperation surely will not last.

## Tribesmen

Tribesmen have always existed in the Lone Heath, and no one has ever really exerted any rulership over them. Most are Chaotic Neutral, and they move around in extended

family groups of 20 or so and more rarely in family aggregates of up to a hundred, but no larger.

Wearing ragged clothing usually made from animal skins, the tribesmen use facial scarring and bird feathers for decoration and ornamental. Vegetable dyes are used for skin coloration and camouflage, and the tribesmen are also excellent mimics of the sounds of marshland animals and fowls, a skill useful in hunting. Spears, especially fine throwing spears, bows, and nets are their most common weapons.

They are always suspicious of outsiders, and since they have little to trade they don't seek any contact. Rangers they know and accept, and sometimes buy a little in the way of knives, tools, or pots from them by bartering with skins or food.

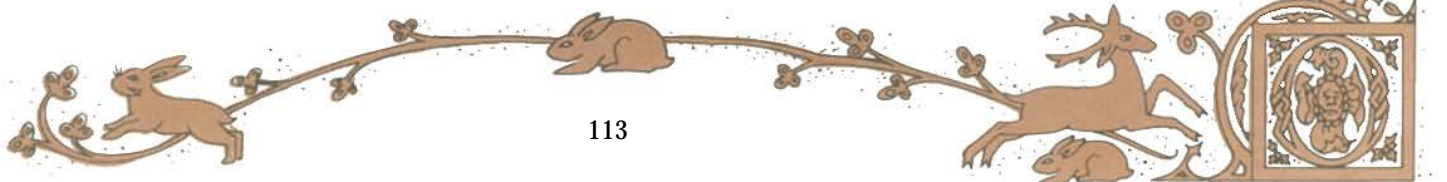
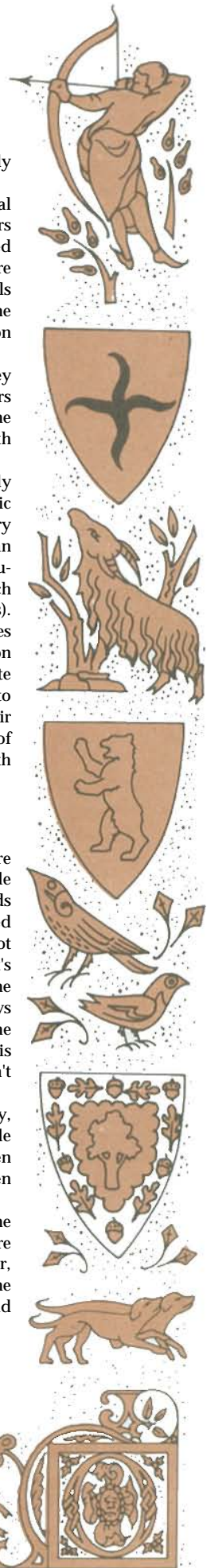
The tribesmen have their own shamans, primarily druids of Obad-hai, who lead them on their nomadic wanderings. Since many small family groups speak very heavily accented Common, or even a variant of Oeridian dialects, the shamans usually do the talking. Lastly, virtually every group has 1d8+2 hunting dogs, animals which also serve as camp guards (treat them as war dogs). Nomadic groups meeting each other will sometimes place bets (of animal skins, fine feathered belts, etc.) on which of their pack is the best hunter. And some celebrate Brewfest by gathering in much larger bands (up to 400 to 500) for massed hunts and an awarding of prizes to their best dogs. That also allows for breeding between packs of the dogs, and for marriage arrangements which in truth have little more subtlety to them.

## Marsh Dwarves

The 200 or so marsh dwarves of the Lone Heath are unique. They are hunter-gatherers, members of a single clan, and they specialize in fishing and trapping lizards and other small reptiles and animals. Visitors are warned to avoid having to listen to a marsh dwarf's "one that got away" story. Every last dwarf has one, and if it's concluded on the same day that the telling begins, the listener is indeed fortunate. Since the telling is always accompanied by the eating of pickled fish and the consumption of thick, sweet berry wine, the listener is also fortunate if the contents of his stomach don't reappear during the storytelling.

This is an odd group of folk. The dwarves have a sly, riddling type of humor which is almost incomprehensible to outsiders and nothing at all like normal dwarven humor. They also have little interest in history or even their own ancestries, which again is highly unusual.

There is no reverence of any dwarven power, and the community lacks priests or shamans. The dwarves are also extraordinarily fastidious. They bathe in the Mikar, or streams around it, at least twice a day. And one of the most esteemed members of the community is an old





# The Grandwood and the Lone Heath



female dwarf who makes scented soaps from animal fat and flower extracts. During Brewfest, which the dwarves consider as the ending of the year (they have their own calendar system), one can hear the drunken dwarves singing some distance away. The dwarves have no time for ornamentation or even golden trinkets, and are severely functional in what they wear and use.

This is a rugged group. They have superb survival skills and are exceptionally hardy (Constitution scores of 11+1d8, and no dwarf has fewer than 4 hp per die). They are alert and vigilant, and while more sociable than most dwarves they are careful with outsiders. They do not give trust readily. Again, they know the rangers, but they are fairly cool even with them.

The dwarves have excellent weather sense, and a few of them have the ability to sense impending danger as if they were precognitive. They make less temporary camps than most people, moving on typically after Brewfest each year, taking their pickled and dried food to somewhere safe and sheltered for winter. During winter, a dwarf might sleep for up to 18 hours a day, almost hibernating. This tends to make them even more long-lived than usual for their race, though the marsh dwarf who tells you he saw the first overking crowned in Rauxes is probably stretching the truth.

## Other Demihumans

The total of gnomes and halflings is probably fewer than 1,000, and they tend to favor burrowed dwellings in the heathland rather than the watery and more fertile marshes. It is almost impossible to harvest much food other than small animals there, but the gnomes in particular have been successful at growing fungi and a distressingly yellow-cream colored tuber underground; these form the basis for their diet.

The halflings, however, are hungrier little folk who like to trade for food, and they always pay with gold signet rings and old imperial coins. Where they acquire these, only they know, and they certainly aren't telling. Most people suspect the burrowing halflings—who have dug much deeper than these folk usually do—must have uncovered some great treasure cache. And the people worry about what else the halflings might uncover if they are encouraged by this to go on digging deeper still.

The 600 high elves dwell exclusively in the marshes. This is surely a group long isolated from all others, for the elves are exceptionally tall. Almost all adults stand considerably more than 6', and the usual build is very slim (subtract -2 from Con and add +2 to Dex for these elves). They have superb senses and unparalleled infravision abilities, up to a 240' range.

The elves are gatherers, and are virtually all regular vegetarians. However, some meat is taken at ritual meals every other Starday, with thanks given to the animal

consumed for giving up its life for the benefit of the elves.

This single extended clan acts as the watchers over the Lone Heath, even more so than the rangers of the place. They cooperate well with the rangers, but for the most part they do not seek any conversation or meetings with other groups. The exception to this is a fighter/mage of clearly considerable age, Carferlen, who has an excellent knowledge of events in Aerdy and, indeed, across much of the Flanaess.

It is obvious he has many sources of information in far-away places—or perhaps just one or two truly exceptionally well-informed friends. Carferlen is always eager to hear news, and he can also express penetrating views on the events of the land ("Well, if I was in Drax's shoes, Corellon forbid, I would..." followed by a very fine exposition of what that despot probably ought to do to further his goals). Carferlen also has an extensive knowledge of the names, specializations, and major achievements of every mage to have walked the Flanaess during his lifetime, and of many well before that—which was a long, long time ago.

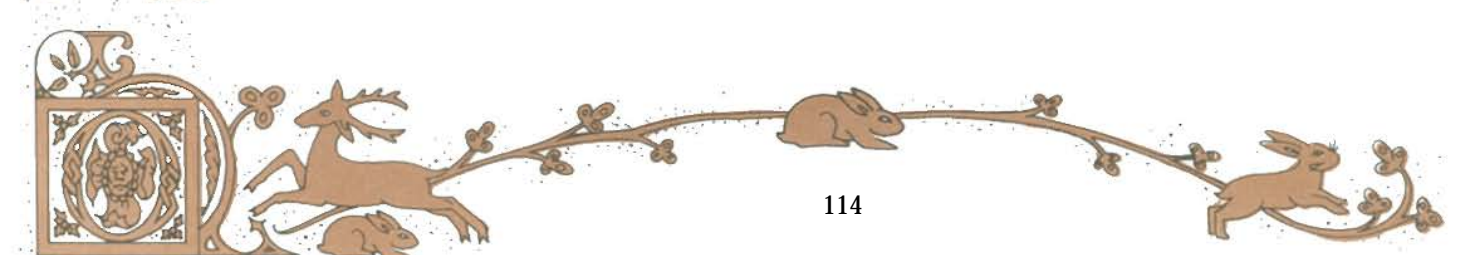
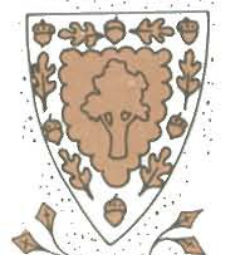
## Rangers and Others

In addition to ordinary tribesmen, there are a total of 700 adventurers who have fled to the refuge of the Lone Heath over the decades. Rangers predominate them, simply because the children born to those who come here tend mostly to take up this profession and because a handful of those arriving train as rangers when they settle here. Oddly enough, these refugees tend to take to the nomadic life relatively easily. It takes some getting used to, for mages used to stuffy alchemist's laboratories and priests used to the musty corridors and halls of great temples. Yet somehow after a few months of grumbling over chilblains, colds, and damp blankets due to nighttime rain or morning dawn life gets easier.

The sense of community between these people, who are overwhelmingly of good alignment, helps. However, it must be said that Reorxen the mage, who has a miniature ceramic house which can be commanded to become an overnight *Leomund's secure shelter*, is a very popular man indeed judging by the number of visitors he gets.

Morale among these people is excellent. A charismatic priest of Pelor, Hyren, organizes meetings and gives blessings and sermons which even those without religious views find uplifting. Hyren has had no few ardent converts to his faith here.

However, the rangers are the leaders of the free people of the Lone Heath, hierarchically organized under their lord, Marcenn Simraith. It is they who protect the borders of the lands, screen and vet newcomers, and teach them survival skills. Watching a ranger slowly losing his patience trying to teach a hopelessly clumsy mage how to set a snare trap is a sight which any DM should spring



# The Grandwood and the Lone Heath

upon PC visitors.

They organize the raiding parties which strike at supply trains heading to or from the Free Cities, though the mages provide a great deal of help with this (with *invisibility*, *protection from evil* 10' radius, *fly* and the like rather than using spells which maximize casualties among their victims). These strikes are vital. They are not just for food and clothing (which aren't in short supply) but for tools, weapons, worked items, and simple goods like parchments and inks, which mages need.

In addition to this community, there are perhaps 5,000 refugees who are normal men and women who could not tolerate the wickedness of the Free Cities, or have fled from afar as Delaric. The stories they have brought from that terrible place have caused some nightmares. Many of these folk have enthusiastically converted to a good-aligned faith if they did not follow one already, and they have learned to survive in the wide expanses of the marshes. About half of them have come here during or since the wars, and adapting to this influx of new faces has been a major difficulty; there are many people to teach and train, and few rangers and other veterans to do it. However, the Lone Heath encourages survival.

## The Future

The Lone Heath has become something of a citadel of good. There are hundreds of capable adventurers and thousands of men and women who could be organized into a levy with excellent morale. This could be quite a force; capable of taking a major city and holding it.

This won't happen for a long time. While the people are enthusiastic, their equipment is poor. It's good enough to fend off attackers, but not to march out and take a land and city. Also, they like the nomad life. There's something about the Lone Heath which cannot be expressed to those who have not lived there. The stars seem brighter in the sky. When a footfall is made in the wrong place, the poisonous snake which darts out just seems to miss that ankle bite which could kill in minutes. Some warm summer days, the mosquitoes just don't seem to bite while the fish just keep taking the bait. There is a deep and insidious good magic at work here, and its effects are subtle. But the place grows on those who come here in good faith.

It is possible, however, that rangers, mages, and others might organize themselves to mount some major strike against Ountsy, Farlen, or another place and take away a great deal of wealth and equipment which might secure the future for the people here. Still, that might actually make things worse, since it might invite major reprisals.

## Gwydiesin of the Cranes

Presented separately from the other characters because of

his uniqueness, this old man holds many of the secrets of the Grandwood and Lone Heath in his heart. His basic stats are:

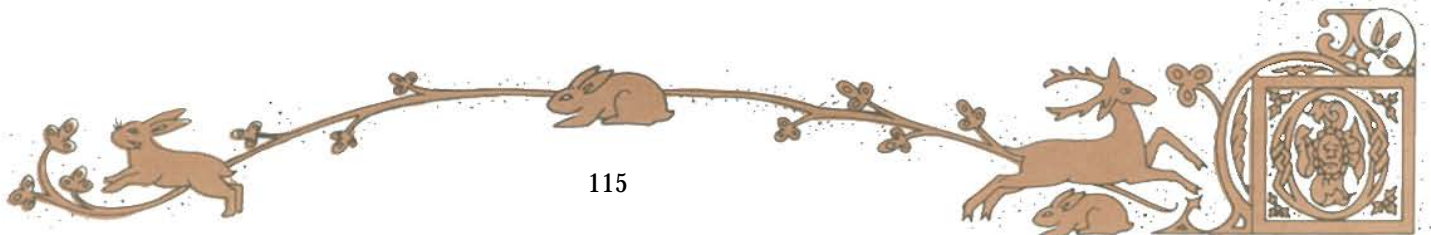
30th-level Bard: Str 15, Dex 16, Con 12, Int 18, Wis 20, Cha 20. AC -4 (silvered chain mail +5 of spell turning, cloak of displacement), hp 116, AL N (NG). Spells: 6 each of levels 1-6, 3 7th-level, 2 8th-level, 1 9th-level, and may substitute one druidic spell per level for a wizard spell. Special abilities: all bardic thief skills at 95% irrespective of modifiers; songs give +4 to morale of friends in melee and once a week he can make friends fearless for 3 turns; identifies all magical items, even relics and nonesuch items; can use all written items usable by wizards without any chance of spell failure, can *polymorph self* as druid three times a day.

These statistics do not set a precedent for high-level bards. Gwydiesin is a singular character, beyond normal game rules.

Gwydiesin is very, very old. He looks perhaps in his early 60's, with a magnificent mane of silver hair tied back in a long braided ponytail and thonged with silvered leather. He wears simple, coarse-clothed brown robes, and his fingers bear no rings. He is a proud 6' 4", of medium build, and he stands upright and regal. Gwydiesin's immense Charisma impresses any who see him. He has many magical items, but the one most often associated with him is the simple lantern he usually carries, which has the combined powers of a *gem of seeing*, a *gem of brightness* and a *helm of brilliance*.

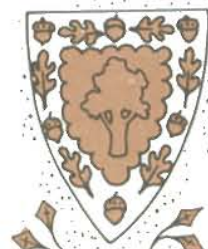
His full name comes from an especial love the old man has of the beautiful black and silver winged cranes which nest every spring along the Mikar, and in the Lone Heath marshlands. Some years, if the waters are high in the headwaters, the marshes flood and the nesting sites become sodden; the cranes abandon their eggs. Gwydiesin then prowls the marshes rescuing the eggs (druids of Obad-hai bring them to him, too), and he takes them back to his home in the deep forest of the Grandwood. Using *control temperature* 10' radius and delicate hand-turning of the eggs round the clock to ensure even warming, the old bard hatches fledglings. Feeding them by hand and stroking the small chicks with an extraordinary gentleness, the time comes when the bard has to teach them to fly (which normally they learn by observing their parents as their own muscles develop). Amused spectators are treated to the spectacle of the old man running around flapping his arms up and down, with a squadron of enthusiastic young cranes doing their clumsy best to follow his example. Any who are close enough might see the hint of a tear in the bard's blue eyes as the last bird flies uncertainly into the sky, and then with greater assurance rises into the wide blue beyond.

Gwydiesin travels where he wishes in forest and heath, and talks with who he wishes. He knows, and deals with,





# The Grandwood and the Lone Heath



most leaders of any significance. Without exception, they speak of the man in tones of reverence. Fiorena has been known to say that if she had known beforehand what she would feel during the bard's recounting *The Doorway to the Summer Stars*, she would gladly have given ten years of life to hear his words. Gwydiesin only offers verse and song (almost always verse in preference) when the mood is upon him, and in truth not everyone always wishes to hear the bard's declamations.

The emotions he can draw forth are so strong as to be painful in their intensity.

Yet, Gwydiesin has a playful and light-hearted side, too. During his retelling of *The Battle of the Trees* to an audience of elder treants (hardly favorers of levity) he teased an especially old birch he knew was slightly resented by the others on account of its self-esteem. He reminded the birch it had been late for that epic struggle with Aerdymen, "nor from any diffidence, but because of his magnificence." The subtlety of his intoning left the birch feeling pleased at the compliment, since Gwydiesin obviously recognized that the birch simply had to have the right moment for entry into the fray, with the other treants were wryly amused at the jest which the birch could not see because of its inflated self-esteem.

Gwydiesin is a child of Johydee, of course. He has spent nearly 700 years in the world, and he has more knowledge than perhaps any soul living on Oerth. There hardly can be a legend, tale, or myth which the man does not know. Often, however, he will tell a tale in its original form which he knows mixes truth with inaccuracy, because he wishes to test the perceptiveness of the listener or because the mood takes him. He does not lie; he tells the tale as it always has been told. But he does not always tell what he knows to be the real truth.

Gwydiesin is a reverer of Beory, although that is putting things too mildly. Rather, what fires Gwydiesin's heart and soul and puts the fire, steel, and magic into his poems and verse is the intense yearning this old, old soul has for union with that power. All of life's richness and beauty he sees in Beory's hands, and once, so many years ago, he walked with her in the Vale of Summer Stars and understood what life's end, and the passage of his soul from Oerth, would bring. Yet, the old man has no thought of death and no desire for it. Oerth is still a place with intense beauty, magic, and wonder to the old bard's eyes, and they still shine as brightly as ever they did.

Gwydiesin is above most "political" concerns. He has seen the rise and fall of the Great Kingdom, and the machinations of those working away in its ruins do not concern him. He does not aid the Grandwood or Lone Heath folk by spellcasting or reciting morale-boosting declamations prior to battle. The effect he has is far subtler. For days after hearing one of his recitations, the listener feels a sense of heightened energy and perception; colors seem brighter, sounds more pleasing,

food and wine taste better, other people seem fairer of face and kinder of expression. That is the bard's gift to the good folk of forest and heath.

Those who come seeking Gwydiesin won't find him. When they come, he will know of it, and he will choose whether to see them. He will choose the time and manner of his appearance. He will know what they wish of him, but that's no guarantee they will go away heartened or informed. The bard makes his own choices.

Gwydiesin is solitary, but in addition to his usual wanderings he meets with a handful of people in the Flanaess. Mordenkainen has eaten and taken wine with the old man, and indeed the two have many things in common, not least their alignment.

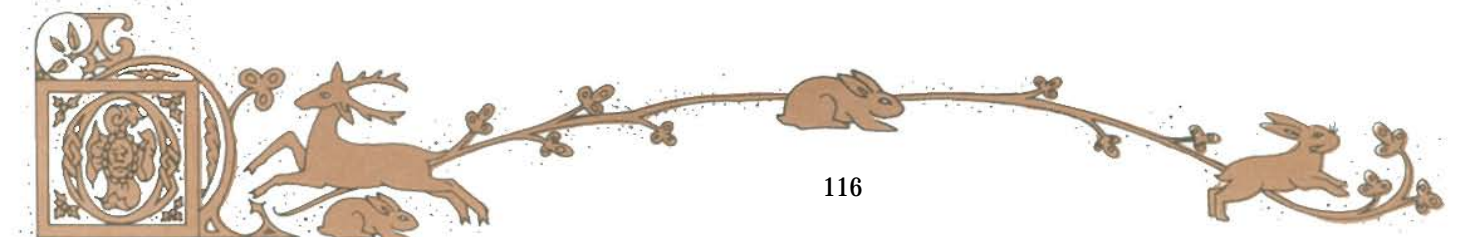
The Circle of Eight have heard the bard's recitations; even the introverted, conservative, and repressed Bigby was shaking when the bard fell silent, and Mordenkainen himself was stirred enough not to repeat the experiment. Gwydiesin's power is unsettling to those who are used to power of their own combined with a firm sense of control. Philidor has been seen laughing with the old man and, incredibly enough, light-heartedly skipping along paving stones of Greyhawk City with the bard keeping pace. Once, some years ago, Gwydiesin arrived at Nightsong's dark home and took him by the collar when they met; Nightsong was not seen for some months afterward.

And the bard travels the planes, surely, for Lhaeo the Scribe has recorded a couple of visits from someone looking very like the old bard who periodically chats with Elminster.

## Other Personalities of the Grandwood and Lone Heath

**Carferlen:** 7th-level fighter/11th-level mage (Dex 18, Int 19, Wis 16, Cha 16). AC -4 or better (*elven chain mail* +5, shield not used, *defender bastard sword* +4), hp 46, AL NG. Carferlen is nearing his 400th year. He is 6' 4", very slim of build, with long, bony fingers and almond-shaped nails which gesture with an effortless grace to emphasize what he says. His hair has streaks of gold and silver among the honeyed curls, and his gray-green eyes are unblinking.

Carferlen has a much wider awareness of the Flanaess's problems than most of his people. He has links with many elves of the lands, including the gray elves of the Tree Lands in the Vesse, and the People of the Testing. His polite, humble manner has endeared him to people such as Kieren Jalucian of Greyhawk and the rulers of Veluna City, where he often travels (and is known to stop over in Mitrik and converse with Bigby). His special concern is the rise of the Scarlet Brotherhood, which he fears more than luz or any Aerdymen power. For this reason, Carferlen is not an infrequent visitor to powerful nobles



# The Grandwood and the Lone Heath

of the House of Darmen. He dislikes their evil, of course, but they are the one faction in Aerdy which appears to share this sense of threat, and his enemy's enemy is his friend. Carferlen is very pragmatic.

This old elf is friendly, kindly, and rarely has a harsh word for anyone. He is a simple, good individual, but his brilliant intellect and well-informed nature make him outstanding among his people. He does not possess or covet magical items much, although his *defender bastard sword* +4 is a potent protection, and he also carries a *wand of paralysis*.

**Fiorena Goldhand:** 11th-level ranger (Str 16, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 16, Wis 17, Cha 16). AC 2/0 (*leather armor* +4, *boots of speed*, shield not used), hp 81, AL NG. Fiorena is 36 years old, 6' 1", wiry and lean, brown-haired and brown-eyed. Even her usual tan doesn't disguise the freckling of her cheeks and arms, and she has an infectious grin. Without any pretensions, she's a natural and open person, part of her Charisma.

Fiorena has a graver, quieter side for all her good humor and especial love of children (though she has never wanted any of her own). She feels the weight of the world on her shoulders; she knows she plays a pivotal role in the defense of the Grandwood and sometimes that's a hard burden to carry. Though she is resilient and resourceful, the friendship and companionship of Auruma is important to her.

Auruma is a young adult gold dragon who almost invariably appears in polymorphed form as a human ranger. He has learned enough from Fiorena to pass muster as a ranger, with knowledge of their signals and secret ways. Auruma comes from Sunndi, and his parents have sent him here to learn more of the ways of humankind far from his home and also to aid the Grandwood folk. A few of the wood elf moonmages know Auruma's real identity, and the dragon is fascinated by their approach to magic and especially by their symbiosis with treants, which are unlike anything he knows from his own home. Fiorena acquired the nickname "Goldhand" for her fondness for wearing gold rings, but there is a second appropriateness to it now which few know.

**Marcenn Simraith:** 14th-level ranger (Dex 17, Con 16, Int 16, Wis 16, Cha 16). AC 2 (*ring of protection* +3, normal leather armor, shield not used), hp 96, AL NG (CG). Marcenn is 35, 5' 11", of medium build, with very tightly curled dark brown hair worn short and brown-hazel eyes. Not by ambition, but simply by acceptance from others, Marcenn has become something of a leader to the Lone Heath rangers and exiles. He simply seems to have the kind of personality and mind which naturally mediates disputes, puts forward practical suggestions, and organizes matters to everyone's best advantage. Puffing at his halfling weed pipe at the campfire, the man

has the aura of a leader. People naturally look to him when deciding what to do, where to go, what decisions to take.

However, Marcenn's other great skill is that his suggestions intuitively tell other people that the best thing to do is what they wanted to do anyway. Or, perhaps, by the time he has finished talking the listener is convinced that Marcenn's suggestion is what he wanted to do originally, even if it wasn't. Marcenn is soft-spoken, persuasive, a storyteller if he needs to be, and he has a great knowledge of the Heath and its history.

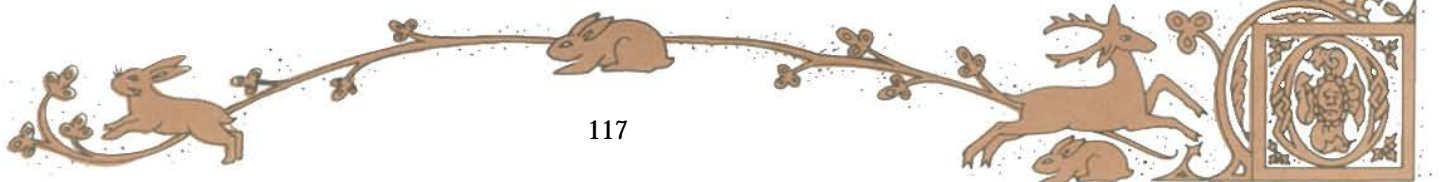
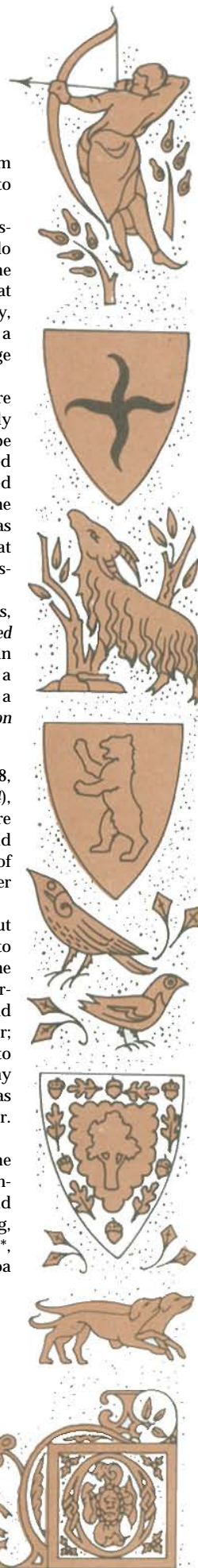
For himself, Marcenn does not know what the future may hold. After all, the Heath's population has greatly increased during and since the wars, and there may be many more newcomers yet. For this reason, he is opposed to precipitate actions or drastic changes. He sees the need to balance raiding the Free Cities for supplies with the need to avoid inviting harsh reprisals. A pragmatist as many lifelong Heathmen are, the ranger waits to see what the future holds. His own natural optimism and generosity mean that he doesn't fear that future.

Marcenn has no permanent companions or followers, but he owns a two-person *carpet of flying* and also *winged boots* (MC: C) so he knows what has been happening in the Heath. If he must fight, he does so two-handed with a *short sword of quickness* in his dominant left hand and a *dagger* +3 in the other. He also owns a *ring of free action* and a 1,000 lb. *bag of holding*.

**Taralene:** 16th-level priestess of Atroa (Int 15, Wis 18, Cha 17). AC 4 (*cloak of displacement*, *ring of protection* +4), hp 88, AL NG. At 51, Taralene has a serene mature beauty. Just a whisker below 6', she has a fine figure, and her auburn hair is thick, wavy and reaches the small of her back. Half the Grandwood folk are in love with her (and the other half is prone to be jealous of that).

The woodlands are her home. While she cares about events in the lands around the forest, and will listen to discussions of what is afoot in Rauxes or Bellport, she does not truly worry herself about them. What is important to her is healing and caring for the animals and peoples of the forest. She knows it as well as any ranger; she has a magical belt which confers on her the ability to walk on water and travel at normal speed over any terrain, *passing without trace* into the bargain. She also has a better knowledge of the forest's evils than any ranger. She keeps a careful watch on Spikerift in particular.

As a priestess of Atroa, the spheres allowed to Taralene are: All, Animal, Charm\*, Creation, Divination\*, Elemental\* (except Air, to which major access is allowed, and Fire, to which she has no access), Guardian, Healing, Necromantic (curative only), Plant, Protection, Sun\*, Travelers\*, Wards, Weather. As a lesser power, Atroa cannot grant 7th-level spells to priests.







# The Lands of Darmen

Pop.: 1,300,000

Capital: None; four major cities

Ruler: None; several major Princes

Rulership: Variable, generally Medium

Cost Multiplier: 110% (but see below)

## From the Ashes?

The House of Darmen believes itself to be inexorably ascending to the malachite throne. There are several reasons for this belief.

Darmen is economically strong. Allied with the priesthood of Zilchus, nobles of this house have preserved some of their old external trade routes and protected merchants from ruinously high tithes and taxes (unsurprising, since many of the throng of princelings of Darmen are Merchant-Princes themselves). Conversely, the serfs and peasants have suffered much, since burdens of taxation have fallen on them and on the small class of freemen who, in the past, found more encouragement from the House of Darmen for their aspirations than they did anywhere else.

Second, Darmen nobles have mostly managed to avoid becoming animuses. They did this by acceding readily to Ivid's orders during the wars (or appearing to do so); by sending doubles and impostors when summoned to Rauxes; and by claiming they could not visit Rauxes because of a pressing need to raise money for the war effort (sending extra tithes to the overking to allay any imperial anger). The House of Darmen is wily and intelligent.

Third, Darmen nobles have mostly managed to maintain their armies in a good condition. The exception is the Glorioles Army, now destroyed, which has cost Nulbish and to a lesser extent Torrich something of their military capability. But generally this house has military muscle and friends and enemies respect this.

Fourth, while the major power players of this house have rivalries, there is a common belief in the fate of the house. The rivalries will be settled one way or another—but not by any dispatch of armies. Everyone understands that this would ruin Darmen's hope for rulership. Prince Dilweg might challenge his rival Xavener to a duel or some ritual contest, but he won't try to oust him by force of arms. And if he loses, he will support his cousin.

Finally, there is a sense of destiny about the House of Darmen. Every major noble family has an illuminated copy of the massive *Histories of Epitecus the Wise*, a combined history and mythology which attributes to ancestors of the House of Darmen virtually every accomplishment of Oeridian prehistory. Children are taught passages from this book by rote, and some older members of House Darmen practice ancestor worship, or at the least hold small monthly services of commemoration to

long-dead ancestors of legend and fable from Epitecus's work. Darmen's past glories, they believe, will come again, even if the means of the house's ascendancy will be different to the military glory and magical prowess in those old fables.

## Princes of Power

While these characters are detailed more fully below, the basics of the power struggles within the House of Darmen come down to five nobles. These are:

Prince Xavener of Kalstrand (NE). Wealthy, militarily powerful, Xavener is a brilliant diplomat. At present, he has skillfully gained increasing acceptance by the priesthood of Zilchus as "their man." He also has one absolutely reliable ally, namely:

Prince Farland of Jalpa (LE). Farland is Xavener's uncle. He lacks real wealth, and his strategic position is difficult because of the proximity of his lands to the western Naelax territories. But the old man has gravitas and great social skill. An arch-manipulator, he is a power broker rather than a power player.

Prince Dilweg of Torrich (LE). This is Xavener's major rival. Dilweg has fire in his guts and more passion than Xavener. He is a mage and has the support of many Darmen mages. Dilweg also favors an alliance with another noble house to gain a broader coalition for Darmen's bid for the throne. This view gains support in some quarters, since it spreads the burden of a war against Ivid, but opposition in others. Many younger princelings support Dilweg.

Prince Harnnad of Nublish (NE). This man is uncertain who to support. Politically convinced that Xavener is the best candidate, he hates him for stealing away the woman he was going to marry. On the other hand, Harnnad was cross-fostered by Xavener's parents, and hence there is a debt of honor on his part to give Xavener support. Harnnad could be a spoiler, a disruptive factor, and the other princes are puzzling out how best to deal with him.

Princess Bersheben (CE/NE). She is a major owner of lands around the Flanmi and has a powerful army at her disposal. Her family cross fostered Xavener and Dilweg, and thus she has potentially great influence.

There are other factors in this mix. Each of these powerful nobles has many lesser nobles on their lands, and these liegemen don't always support their masters. Indeed, much diplomacy by each prince deals with persuading the liegemen of rivals that their master is not the one to whom they should give support. Such rebellion would not take the form of open revolt, obviously. But House Darmen is considering how to settle the rivalries within it, and Bersheben's suggestion is for a secret ballot of every Darmen prince in the lands. This has opened the door to bribery, intimidation, and



# The Lands of Darmen

"persuasion" which may be exactly what Bersheben intended. She is very chaotic, and enjoys the uncertainty of the hour even though she wishes for an eventual unity of the major princes and a march on Rauxes.

## Beyond the Lands

One of the factors favoring the House of Darmen is the relative lack of serious problems it faces on the borders of its territories. This makes it at least as powerful as North Province, for example. Grenell has more money and bigger armies than the Darmen nobles but he has to face orcs, undead, barbarians and worse on his doorstep. The lands of Darmen offer an easier life.

Northwest, the lands of House Cranden provide a buffer between the unpredictable evils and power of Almor and Darmen. Westward, South Province is a potential threat, but its ruler has concerns other than Darmen, and his energies are expended elsewhere. Eastward, Medegia offers troublesome raiders and even some fiends but no organized military threat. Northeast, the armies of the overking are separated from Darmen's lands by the western tract of Naelax lands which have no powerful single ruler, and many pragmatists who might throw in their lot with a unified Darmen army.

The only significant problems arise to the south, where the peoples of Sunndi do not discriminate between one royal house of Aerdy and another and are still vengeful for their treatment at the hands of the Glorioles Army. They raid into the southern Darmen lands, and Nulbish in particular has to expend men and money defending its lands against them.

The one shadowy problem which keeps Darmen princes awake at night is that of the Scarlet Brotherhood. Far to the south is their homeland. Southwest they hold the old Iron League lands; southeast they hold Duxchan and its fleet. House Darmen recognizes that should the Brotherhood send its assassins and spies to Aerdy, their lands are a likely first target. Recent events in Nulbish and Torrich have worried the princes greatly and disrupted their planning for overthrowing Ivid.

## Life in the Lands of Darmen

Though different cities and lands have their points of variation, there are general qualities to life here.

Merchants dominate in many respects. They are deferred to by most folk, and even soldiers treat them with some deference. Being a merchant gives one higher social status even than an artisan of many years accomplishment. Merchants guilds are powerful, including many princes as members, and the pecking order established within them is subtle. There is a "Merchants' Cant" spoken here, similar to Thieves' Cant in that it has a vocabulary dealing with activities specific to their profes-

sion: costs, prices, travel, and weather conditions.

Merchants guilds are also the forums where a great deal of day-to-day governance is conducted. Because every prince of any note at all is a member of such a guild, political decisions are usually made in the great guildhalls which even small towns possess. Armies, mercenaries, even city and town works may be paid for through the guilds. A major part of all taxes and tithes goes to these guilds, which then pass on a portion of this to the landowning princes as their tax and tithe in turn.

Administrative duties of government are often conducted in offices in the guildhalls, with sergeants-at-arms of city watches and militias, civil engineers, and more cloistered there.

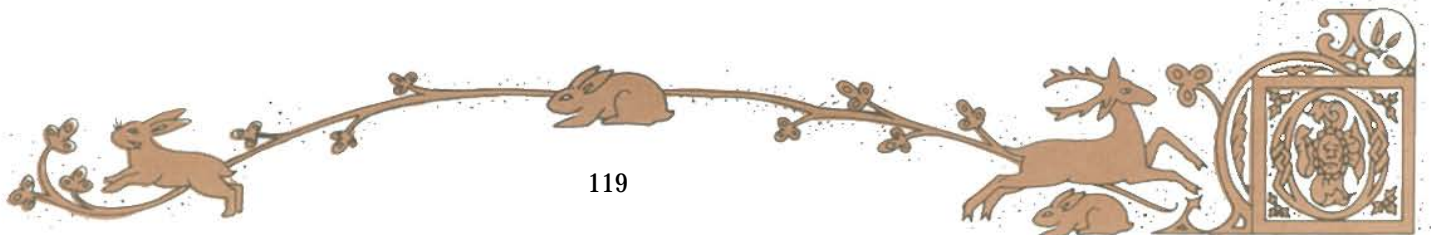
Merchants have specific dress codes in many cities. These vary from city to city, so that traveling merchants can recognize each other. Variations in costume (always worn for commercial transactions and discussions) are as subtle, and as impressive in their richness, as the heraldries of any noble house, army, or even nation.

All this means that commonfolk do not fare so well. The huge majority are serfs, possessions of their merchant landowner or landlord, and treated as such. In these lands, if you have gold in your pocket you might be somebody. If you don't, you're just a serf, and serfs can be bought and sold without any reference to their family situations, welfare, or feelings.

The evil of House Darmen is as well exemplified by this as by anything else. Some sages and scholars of the house have actually written learned tomes discussing the possibility that the "serf race" is somehow not fully human, a vicious and malign view which may not be doctrine, but which is held by many Darmen princes.

Money is power, and power is everything, the Darmen saying goes. In the dominant noble families within the house, the duties of honor which come from cross-fostering and respect for elders (which is more marked here than for any other house, save House Cranden) do count for something. The politics of House Darmen cannot simply be reduced to who has the greatest force available.

House Darmen has evolved a series of intriguing social rituals for settling matters of rivalry and dispute, its elders having long ago seen that assassinations and wars tended only to weaken the house and strengthen rivals. Conclaves of elders will deal with minor squabbles between princelings. Commercial disputes and rival land claims are settled by meetings of merchant guilds. Disputes of real passion and anger are settled in ritual combats or trials of strength or pain; these vary from nonlethal duels to contests of endurance. Darmen has many, many such rituals, and to disobey the long-established formulas and resort to violence or force is simply unacceptable. One's own liegemen would desert, and throw in their lot with whichever rival was nearest





# The Lands of Darmen

and strongest.

Beyond all this, everyday life in these lands has a more relaxed air than elsewhere. This is especially true now, since Darmen's cities are strong and well-defended and most of its lands are secure. But it has always been so. Most folk here are pragmatic, and merchants travel, which gives them a more cosmopolitan outlook on life. There is more tolerance of diversity in these lands in many ways. To be sure, good priesthoods have never fared well here for their messages were generally opposed to the money-grabbing, power-loving ethos of the house, and they have been quietly suppressed. But demihumans have fared better than elsewhere, especially if they had some trade or skill merchants could make money from exploiting (Kalstrand has a noted group of halfling "contract cooks").

The traveler has always found himself less subjected to interrogations, military harassment, and general brutishness than in most of Aerdy. He has always paid for this, from the high tolls levied along the *dirawaen* roads to the continual ripping-off at markets, taverns, and the like, but that is a price many have been willing to pay for respite from the more brutish evils of the lands.

## Civilization

Population density is higher here than in any other sizeable tract of land in the Flanaess. Much of the land is farmed, and there are few wild areas. Outside of a handful of dangerous, wild or cursed terrains (one of which is noted below), encounter checks should be modified so that meetings with farmers, merchants, adventurers, etc., comprise at least 80% of the total.

## Thieves

In the cities of these lands, thieves have an interesting life. Where there are many rich merchants, there are many thieves, and these lands are no exception. The Darmen merchants regard them as an acceptable nuisance, provided that (1) they don't get over-greedy, (2) they don't get caught in the act, and (3) they aren't outsiders. The situation which prevails is that such-and-such a person may be suspected to be a thief and still be able to pass in good society. If his style of robbery has some panache or real skill, he might even gain some kudos accordingly. But such an individual should not ruin his victims, and he should not be caught. If he is discovered, amputation of the hands, exile, and execution are the likeliest fates.

Thieves from beyond the Darmen lands are treated harshly by both the law and resident thieves, and should avoid plying their skills here unless they are very able.

## Wizards, Sages, and Scholars

These are not held in esteem by House Darmen. They, too, are resources to be brought in as necessary. Wizardry and learning are interesting only if they are useful, practically oriented, and have some pragmatic purpose to the purchaser of arcane skills. While this house has few wizards, those it possesses are often powerful, for they must be determined and skilful to rise above the general lack of encouragement they receive. If they show a real awareness of the need for practicality at all times, then they will be valued highly. If they're interested in arcane lore and obscure secrets, they can go hang.

## Locations and Settlements

### The Lands of Kalstrand

These lands, reaching some two-thirds of the way to Jalpa in the area shown on the color map, are owned by Prince Xavener and a number of cousins and siblings. This is an economic powerhouse; Kalstrand stands at a river junction, and a *dirawaen* road leads north to Jalpa and into the heart of Aerdy while the Therry and Mikar Rivers used to bring trade from the south and east. This has declined with the fall of Medegia, but some still comes overland to Nulbish and then on upriver. On the southern fork of the Windmarch route, Kalstrand has its great annual trade fair at mid-Wealsun, and major harvest market-fairs.

These lands are fertile and well-settled. Grains, vegetables, fruits, and livestock all thrive here. The Thelly River yields up gemstones to the determined panner; most of these resources lie farther north toward Rel Deven or farther east at Bluelode, however. Rulership in all these lands is high. Armies and militias are well-organized, and the different local liegemen of Xavener cooperate well enough with each other and with the men of Jalpa to the north. This is a wealthy and prosperous land indeed.

### Kalstrand

A city of 19,000 people, Kalstrand is prodigiously defensively constructed. In the past, hostile men and dwarves from the Glorioles, not to mention monsters, were a threat to the burgeoning city. After the construction of double city walls and an excavated moat defense (Kalstrand has a good river harbor, aiding trade), and the installation of key magical defenses, the city found itself attracting more and more people. Its population has doubled in the past 40 years, and a new city section is being built northward with an extension of the city walls being currently completed.

Kalstrand is rich. The cost multiplier for goods is 140%. This applies especially to staple goods; luxuries are only 100-120% of normal cost. The city has very few slums or

# The Lands of Darmen

areas of poor people; city laborers and menials generally walk the two or three miles from a number of villages around Kalstrand to work in the city itself.

There is much to wonder at. The Merchants' Guild is proud of the majestic buildings it has paid for, and the great columned guildhall is only one of the great sights. Others include the spectacular Hovering Gardens (levitation magic keeping these terraced, exotically vegetated, bowers in place over the northern city) and the Museum of Antiquities. The museum has a remarkable number of old Baklunish and Suel relics and items as well as Oeridian ones, but the priests of Boccob who administer it are both unhelpful and pompous and delight in being difficult.

The city is dominated by Prince Xavener, both by virtue of his regal mansion complex with its fountains, gardens, marbled towers, trussed roofs, and gilded wind-braces and also by his personality. Xavener is an urbanite, and Kalstrand reflects that. He is also a consummate politician, and Kalstrand reflects that, too. An outsider never can be quite certain what anyone here truly thinks of him. This is a city of half-truths, silences, concealments, and polite smiles masking all manner of backstabbing and cruel treacheries.

The cathedral of Zilchus is huge, and its icons must be worth more than the building itself, which cost 200,000 gp to construct. The head of Zilchus's church in Aerdy, Larissen, is almost a house prisoner here. Xavener rescued him from threats in Rauxes but now insists the priest cannot leave, and Patriarch Cherench of Kalstrand agrees with the Prince, having a genuine concern for Larissen's safety. Larissen is unhappy, because here he is too closely identified with the Prince whose hospitality it would be churlish not to acknowledge. This restricts his freedom for political maneuvers, as he is well aware.

The major population of visitors here is Ahlissan, since Darmen nobles own land there and trade is conducted between Kalstrand and Ahlissa. Kalstrand offers the best opportunity for gaining advance knowledge of Ahlissa before entering it; and, like everything in this city, the information is available to the curious—for the right price.

## The Coach Keeps

This string of fortified coaching taverns along the *dirawaen* road to Jalpa illustrates part of the reason for Darmen's current supremacy. They are well secured with troops, and well fortified, with regular patrolling of the road for protection from bandits. They are also comfortable and have one suite of rooms in each building, which is truly luxurious and has protections against low-level divination spells below 4th level. Travel along these roads is thus inviting for merchants and adventurers, stimulating commerce and bringing money to Jalpa and

Kalstrand and the Darmen lands around. At least one of Xavener's many siblings or cousins lives either in, or close by, each of these keeps. And the inquisitive might hang around to overhear some interesting tidbits of gossip about intrafamily grumbles and disputes in each of these places.

## Hornish

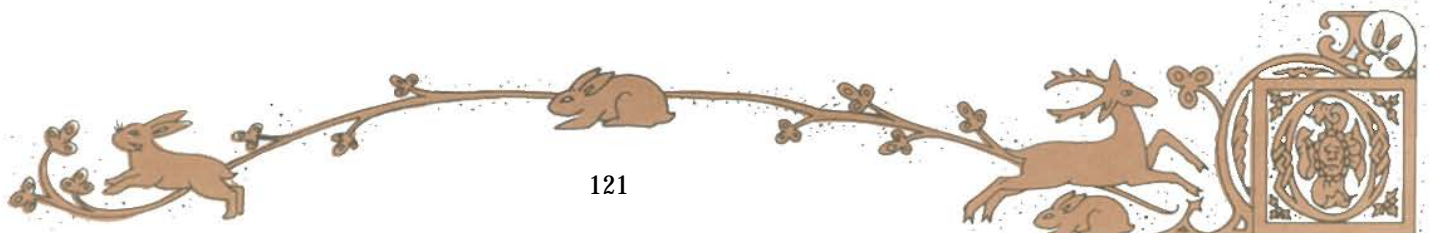
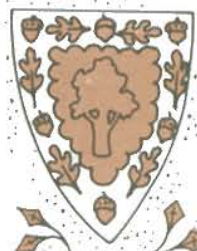
Hornish is in many ways typical of the many bustling trade and market towns and villages which have sprung up along road and river in these lands, linking Torrich with Kalstrand and Jalpa. The singular twist to this settlement of 1,250 people is the canoemen's boating yards and sheds. While cogs are used on riverways farther south, northward these canoemen are used individually as scouts and collectively as escorts for smaller merchant vessels. They are very skilled, and DMs should give appropriate proficiencies: the men are fighters of levels 1-3, have Dexterity scores of 12+1d6, wear leather armor, and use throwing knives, short swords and buckler shields. They move at 25% faster than normal in their very well-designed and compact vessels (average speed of 5 miles per hour).

## Strand

Strand is a village of 900 people with two notable features. One is the large walled keep with a garrison which keeps watch over the border with Ahlissa and acts as a center for spies headed there and also into the lands around Rel Deven and beyond. The stable of swift light warhorses, and the five resident mages, testify to the importance of the place strategically. There is also a small shrine to Istus which receives a steady supply of pilgrims, for it contains a holy relic; a strand from one of Istus's woven webs. The strand is said to be an infallible guide in some matters, able to reveal by changing color whether a child has the innate skills to be a mage, if a person's malady is due to a magical curse or affliction, and more. The shrine thus receives a constant trickle of hopeful parents and afflicted souls, which provide a constant headache for the men of Prince Karalrak, one of Xavener's younger brothers. They must be sure that none are spies, especially of the Scarlet Brotherhood.

## The Lands of Jalpa

The lands in Farland's fiefdom are similar to those in his nephew's dominion, but west of Balaour there is an expanse of fairly barren plains which stubbornly refuses to yield anything in the way of plant growth beyond rank, knotted, ground-hugging yellowed grass. There are many tales which explain this blight, but they are only fables for a drunken evening by a tavern fire. This is out of place in these rich, wealthy lands. Yet, Farland's lands





# The Lands of Darmen

have their share of oddities and in this small but secure fiefdom, there is a great deal more than meets the eye.

## Jalpa

Jalpa is set back several miles from the very shallow and sluggish headwaters of the "Little Flannmi," as the riverlet east is known.

Jalpa's 22,500 people are used to affluence. Even more than Kalstrand, this city is virtually central to all of Aerdy, and as such trade, information, mercenaries, and the like flow from all directions into and out of Jalpa. For this reason, the city has more hostleries than any other city in the Flanaess; some 750 in all. This is why Jalpa is no longer so prosperous. Much of that traffic has been sharply reduced, especially the Urnst, Nyronnese, and Greyhawk caravans which used to come through Almor. Perhaps a third of Jalpa's people used to make a living by servicing the needs of visitors and travelers, and many are finding it hard to scrape a living now. Many shopkeepers and artisans have boarded up their shops; they did not have the reserves of wealth which have sustained Kalstrand. Jalpa was a city of small business folk, rather than the dominant wealthy merchants of Kalstrand, and this shows.

Jalpa is also a tenser city than Kalstrand. It is closer to places such as Permanence where Ivid's supporters still hold sway, and this gives everyone greater pause for thought.

These two factors have brought more villainy to Jalpa than to other Darmen cities. Many poorer folk have taken to petty theft, mugging, burglary, and worse. More refugees from eastern lands have fled here bringing the habits of evil lifetimes with them. There are rumors of a group of necromancers of Nerull having fled here from Rauxes, and wilder versions of the tale say that they have a powerful relic in the form of a golden skeleton which can be animated at night when Luna is full, striking victims with the death gaze of a nabassu. These may be fanciful tales, but one won't hear anything like them in Kalstrand. The number of overnight disappearances in the city lends some credibility to such stories, though of course many people are leaving Jalpa to escape creditors and penury.

All this is part of the backdrop to why the urbane, conservative Prince Farland is actively promoting his nephew's claim to lead House Darmen to the malachite throne. Farland senses that if Darmen doesn't head east and strike, evils which lie east will come and strike Darmen. Farland is assiduously courting allies for his relative among free factions such as the rulers of Roqborough and Carnifand. And he is marshalling the armies of his liegemen, who have a high loyalty to the old but still forceful prince. Farland has perhaps 700 mercenary troops in and around his city, including imperial desert-

ers who are selected for a real hatred of Ivid and their old commanders.

Finally, despite its penury in some areas, Jalpa has an air of faded magnificence which is distinctively different from other Darmen cities. Buildings are upkept more poorly than elsewhere, but they often seem to be an embodiment of the perfections of classical ideas of architecture. Some older temples, mansions, and civic buildings are truly majestic to behold. The most famous is the eerie Polyphonium, built by a distant ancestor of Otto the mage with the same shared obsession with sound and the human voice. With its nested scalloped ceiling and roof structures, and bizarre cross-beamed internal structure (allegedly designed to allow perfect sound), the place looks bewildering. Some claim that metamagical operations and illusions using sound distortions can be most beneficially practiced and performed here, but the Polyphonium's aged—and, ironically, half-deaf—gnomish curator doesn't allow any mage meddling unless triplicate signed permits from Farland himself are presented.

## Balaour

Balaour may be a trade stopover point, where many rivermen unload goods for despatch to Jalpa, but it is a stranger and more insular place than most trading posts. Houses that have windows here have shutters upon them. Virtually no one leaves their homes alone at night, and all wear a small neck pendant with the motif of a hound's head upon it as a protection. Simply, the 600 folk here are intensely superstitious regarding the dreaded "black dog" of the western moorlands. Spectral, silent, radiating a paralyzing chill and capable of causing almost instant death by its fetid breath and raking claws, this enormous brute is said to stalk the moor at unpredictable times and to slay any it meets. Most disappearances and misfortunes which befall anyone in the village are attributed to this beast. There are a hundred and one rumors of the evil which conjured the creature into being, with the commonest version being the tale of an evil mage-priest (perhaps a servant of Tharizdun, though the villagers will never say that name openly) who buried some fell magical item somewhere on the moors, and conjured his own nemesis into being. All this would be but ignorant superstition if not for the fact that the moor is so barren and has patches of treacherous disguised bog which can draw down a man into a watery grave in a minute or less. Mists and gray clouds hover over and across the moor even on some sunny days, and the place radiates a faint aura of evil and magic. The name of the village echoes the cry the hound is said to make: "baaal... oooo.... urrrr."

## Bar Strannach

This village of 900, strategically placed along the great

# The Lands of Darmen

Jalpa-Rel Deven highway, has a legend even more peculiar than that of Balaour. In CY 172 a huge fomorian giant, said to be 40 feet tall, staggered into the village, slew half the occupants, and then screamed some crazed and allegedly prophetic utterances regarding the Great Kingdom's future history and fate. Collapsing in a ghastly fit, the giant spewed forth a book, the Lays of Bar Strannach which is still preserved in a small shrine to Boccob. This shrine also has the spine and skull of the fomorian, from which one could estimate the giant to have been perhaps 25 feet tall—much less than the embellished legend suggests, but still extraordinary.

The book has endless riddling verses which indeed seem to be some kind of prophetic and demagogic work. It is possible, with imagination, to see the rise of the House of Naelax and its fall in the verses inscribed in Old Suloise by its unknown author. Sages and scribes regularly travel to consult it, and Mordenkainen (disguised) and Philidor (openly) are among them; so, too, are representatives of Xavener and Strychan. That such luminaries consult this work suggests that it cannot be merely pretension and dissimulation, but its riddling is so obscure as to confound all but the very wisest of those who read it.

More mundanely, Bar Strannach is home to 100 of Farland's excellent light cavalry who protect the roads leading to Jalpa and for some 60 miles westward. Along the *dirawaen* road farther west, Rel Deven's men patrol; relations between the two groups are generally good, but cool.

## The Lands of Torrich

These lands have the same fertility and general economic and social qualities as those of the eastern Darmen lands. The major difference is that these lands have more western exiles than the other Darmen lands, and there is a division of land between Prince Dilweg and Princess Bersheba. This leads to even more in the way of political intrigue and the use of troop patrols along roads and highways as spies. Travelers will be stopped and asked the purpose of their journey and destination more often here than on other roads. The troops aren't hostile or belligerent, but they are very definitely curious and make regular reports to their masters describing who they encounter.

### Torrich

Originally built as a castle stronghold on a hill, which now lies just north of the main city, it was natural that Torrich would soon support a growing population. Because the stronghold never fell to bandit, foreigner, or feuding Aerdy noble, Torrich gained a reputation as a secure, safe place. For this reason it has attracted more than its fair share of exiles during and after the Greyhawk

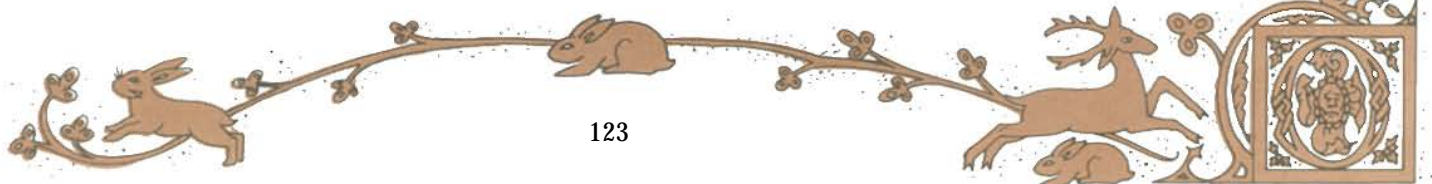
Wars. Before the Wars it had a population of 19,000, including the shanty town which has sprung up east of the city. This figure now stands at 27,000. Prince Dilweg, landowner of much of the Darmen lands west of the Flanmi, is a young, charismatic, and combative man who has caught the mood of the population, including young Darmen nobles outside his own lands. Dilweg urges a strike on Rauxes. And there are many, especially among the exiles, who are hot-headed enough to receive this message enthusiastically. Dilweg is cunning; he knows that as time goes by, Xavener will grow in strength, and his only real hope of becoming overking lies in precipitate action. Death or glory; Dilweg's fate would more likely be death, but he doesn't care.

However, Dilweg is restrained by two factors. One is Princess Bersheba. The other is the unmasking in early Wealsun of a nest of four Scarlet Brotherhood spies posing as silk merchants in the city. Dilweg's watchful and perceptive Captain of the Watch, the half-elf Crenelland, intercepted messages and instructions being smuggled in silk bales to the spies and arrested and executed them. Now, Torrich's troops are very watchful and many ordinary people are subjected to random visits and searches of their homes and property. Dilweg and Crenelland haven't publicized the reason for this, and many folk are angered by these intrusions. Dilweg has only informed Harnnad among the other major princes, hoping to gain his support for Dilweg's ambitions.

Thus Torrich is overcrowded, rather dirty and decrepit in parts, and has an atmosphere of suspicion and resentment. It also has an unpleasant Thieves' Quarter, mostly occupied by mercenaries in Dilweg's service (or ones who have come seeking his coin). Trouble flares up there fairly often, and in its darker corners half-orc faces can be glimpsed and even, it is said, a drow or two. If Dilweg has alliances with that race, he is a dangerous power player indeed.

## Bersheben's Lands/Forinn

From her home at Forinn, a village which is rapidly growing to town size with 1,900 people, Princess Bersheben commands a sizeable army. Unusually for Darmen nobles, those armies include 800 orcs from the Grandwood. Bersheben usually employs them for raids into that wood, and as bodyguards for the hated tithesmen when they go collecting. These orcs are unusually well-disciplined, and 20% of them have 1+1 to 3+3 HD, and use chain mail and shields, giving them AC 4. They are detested, but also much feared, by the peasants Bersheben treats with contempt. Many minor Darmen nobles hold tracts of land within Bersheben's fief, and they stay tight-lipped about her. None of them like her, and through the years several attempts have been made on her life. She has evaded them all, and some will quietly refer to her as





# The Lands of Darmen

"Bersheben the Undying." She laughs at such a title, but in truth she is as evil as Ivid himself.

## Spiral

This highly unusual castle has the form of a double square keep with internal mirror imaging and a nest of spiral staircases, many of which descend to labyrinthine dungeons below. Bersheben uses it as a garrison for troops patrolling the Mikar's banks, keeping careful watch over Medegia. Harnnden of Nulbish, and Dilweg, both pay monies to support this castle since they have a vested interest in keeping Medegian madmen or fiends well away from their lands. Spiral has been home to one of Bersheben's advisors, tucked away in a tower for nearly 300 years. Rexifer is a Garasteth lich, whose field of study is the Blood War between baatezu and tanar'ri. Utterly unconcerned with house politics, he causes no problems for Bersheben, though why she visits him once a month or so for conclaves is quite unknown. Before the wars, such people as Karoolck came to visit Rexifer, suggesting that the lich's knowledge of Abyssal and Hellish affairs must be very extensive. Rexifer is absent-minded and will happily talk for hours about his field of study, but Bersheben's troops make certain that no uninvited guests get the chance to pick the lich's brains. Bersheben's younger sister, Baaneth, one of Darmen's few mages, uses her divinational skills and abjurations to detect and fend off magical intrusions. And she, too, learns much from the lich. Some say Baaneth is every bit as wicked and cruel as her sibling, and even more dangerous because of her lack of self-control, and magical skills; she is 11th-level.

## Willnend

Largest of the towns in these lands, with a population of 4,400, Willnend was once a major marketplace with a Windmarch fair during Goodmonth. Like Pardue farther south, it has an obviously strategic position for trade. Now, with so much trade having gone, it is a backwater, and precisely for that reason it attracts many folk at a loose end—adventurers, grim-faced men returned from the horrors of Medegia, a few down-at-heel mercenaries seeking work, and the like. No powerful individuals will be found here, so this is a good place for lower-level PCs to become involved in intrigues. It is a place to pick up information about the lands around, since many here haven't learned the need to keep their mouths shut when they have over-indulged in the cloudy mahogany-brown ale known as Beory's Draught which is brewed here.

## The Lands of Nulbish

Prince Harnnad of Nulbish has a smaller dominion than his rivals, but they are rich lands. North of the Thelly the

land is fecund, and the gemstones found by river panners bring in good revenues. Because Harnnad himself has retained personal ownership and administration of Bluelode, he has become a rich man and thus can afford to levy light taxes on his liegemen, helping assure their loyalty.

However, the people of these lands are jumpy and paranoid. Memories of the near-fall of Nulbish to Osson's men during the wars are still fresh, and families here lost many more of their sons to soldiers than elsewhere. The unmasking of one of Harnnad's most trusted advisers as a Brotherhood spy has leaked into general knowledge. This, too, worries people who are far more suspicious of strangers than elsewhere in the Darmen lands. One effect of this is that propitiation of evil deities such as Hextor and even Nerull has become more common here. And evil priests are finding more converts to their faiths by the day. Increasingly, danger and bandits are infesting these lands, and too many of Harnnad's nobles have grown fat and careless because of the minimal taxes they have to pay their lord.

Sunndi raiders also have begun to threaten river traffic along the southern banks of the Thelly. Elven bowmen were not an unexpected threat, but dwarven engineers from the Hestmark-Glorioles range have allied with them and can mount river blockades with logs and improvised rafts overnight, making them truly dangerous. The demihumans tend to shoot first and ask questions later. They are used to Aerdy men disguising themselves in the raiment of good-aligned faiths to confuse them, making the elves still more disinclined to parley.

## Nulbish

Sixteen thousand folk inhabit this city, which has increasingly become something of a military garrison. Nulbish's flotilla of heavy cogs and riverboats bristles with well-armed and vicious troops, and many have a mage on board as well. Harnnad has shown an awareness of the value of mages, not least because the city's military commander, Magistar Vlent, is a fighter/mage who has become something of a heroic figure after his skilled defense of the city during the wars.

Two months ago, Vlent's right-hand man was exposed as a traitor and spy for the Scarlet Brotherhood by Vlent himself. None doubt the man's guilt (it needed only minimal torture to extract a confession), but many whisper that Vlent himself should be suspected by association. Harnnad has the wisdom to see that this is exactly what the Scarlet Brotherhood would want him to think; Vlent is a fine commander, and his loss would be irreplaceable. However, what worries the prince is that somehow the information about the spy became common knowledge, and he cannot discover who leaked it. Because that leak has caused public concern, bordering

# The Lands of Darmen

on unrest, he is fairly sure that it must be the work of the Brotherhood. Which, in turn, suggests they have another spy in his court.

Nulbish still has war-damaged city walls and perimeter guard towers which are currently being repaired before the winter. Behind those defenses, the city lacks the grandeur of Kalstrand or Jalpa, and city life has a tenser, more rushed quality than in those other cities. The priesthood of Hextor is strong here, though they have no leading priest of real charisma or power. Harnnad makes sure that their loyalty is to him, and not to Ivid, but that means that he must maintain constant spying on them. Among the mercenary forces brought to reinforce Nulbish after Ossoon's siege and the departure of the Glorioles Army are no few orcs, half-orcs, and ex-penal militias—tough and brutal creatures Harnnad is proving unwilling to release from service. Nulbish has more places to avoid than most Darmen cities, and a violent, brutal slum quarter filled with exiles and army deserters. Even the city watch does not often go there, so one takes one's life in one's hands visiting there, especially after dark.

## Bluelode

Bluelode's three linked and walled keeps defend this village of 900 people and the vital gem resources of the Thelly riverbed. Harnnad's personal elite plate-clad Steel Squadron are the guards here and constantly watch over the panning. A mage employs a *wand of metal and mineral detection* to meet the quarterly quotas Harnnad lays down to keep his coffers full. And any form of theft is punished by immediate execution. The keeps, with their very strong walls and elite troops, are also said to contain dungeon-prisons where Harnnad incarcerates political enemies or those he suspects of treachery. And there are rumors of a drow torturer with fine interrogation skills dwelling below the central keep.

## Citadel of Salt

Here, a castle is being erected on the site of a keep razed by Ossoon during the wars which once protected an old salt trade route from the east, hence the name. Harnnad has dwarven prisoners taken from Sunndi. He forces them to work on the fortification, their loyalty ensured by the fact that their children are kept hostage at Bluelode against any possibility of sabotage. Unfortunately, since most of the laborers they direct are criminals serving forced labor terms, the dwarves cannot keep up with the punishing schedule for completing the work (which is planned to finish in the summer of 586 CY). The dwarves are regularly beaten and brutally treated by their captors, many of whom are orcs and half-orcs.

The citadel is being built as a defensive bastion and riverboat base to protect the lands from the folk of

Sunndi, making their work even more odious to the wretchedly unhappy dwarves forced to work here.

## Pardue

Built where the Mikar and Thelly rivers slowly meander toward each other, Pardue is another tradeplace quieter than it once was. Its 3,300 people still find fishing and farming lucrative, however, and the 600 soldiers posted here to protect against the threats from Medegia and from the lands south add security to their lives, even if they also add an element of brutishness.

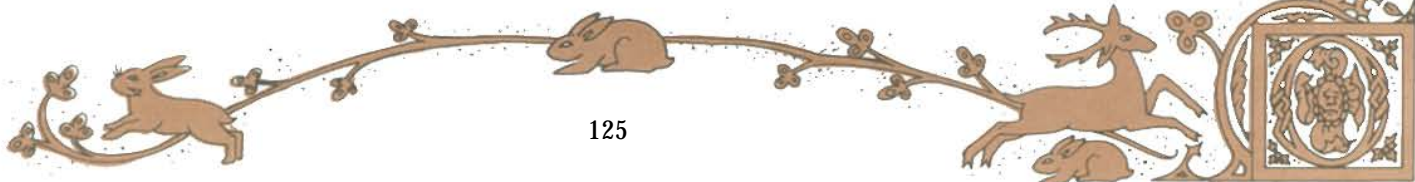
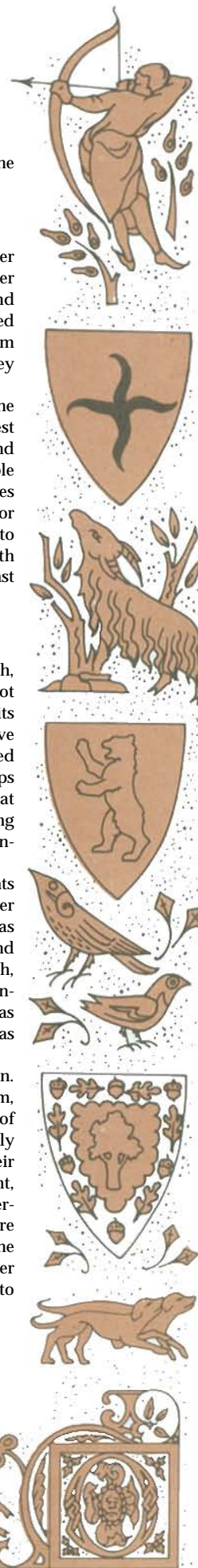
The townsfolk's lives are at least brightened up by the open-air antics of Wallzern, a maverick 10th-level priest of Olidammara whose satirical and sarcastic songs and verses poke fun at virtually all the powerful and noble folk of the Darmen lands and beyond. How he manages to get away with this without being arrested, exiled, or executed is a mystery to most people. He just seems to have a charmed life; certainly, the man is too happy with the attraction of wine most days to defend himself against any serious attempt to dispose of him.

## Sarndt

Situated along a highway linking Nulbish and Torrich, and a natural stopover point for river trade, Sarndt is not the simple market village one might expect. Among its 1,400 people are an enclave of about 90 flinds, which have their own little quarter within Sarndt. They have lived here for 300 years, descended from enslaved troops brought from the Grandwood by a noble who felt that their charisma towards gnolls might be useful in dealing with the forest gnolls and building up a force of humanoid troops.

That plan never quite worked out, but the descendants of the charmed flinds began quietly to take up other activities to fill the spare time when they weren't used as troops or scouts. Now, Sarndt has a few little flind cobbler's shops, flind purveyors of candles, oil, tar, pitch, and more. Flinds lack the physical skills for true artisan-ship, but their intelligence (the average flind is almost as smart as the average human) and lawful alignment has made them an effective part of the economy.

They speak a guttural, half-barked form of Common. And while some of the humans of Sarndt detest them, most are reconciled to their presence after generations of coexistence with little trouble. The flinds are wholly urbanized and would not be able to survive in their "natural" habitat now. Many present a comical sight, dressed in the baggy pantaloons and blouses they generally favor, though they don't wear shoes. But they are smart and industrious, and the traveler will find that if he needs to buy food or some simple equipment long after dusk, it will be a flind's shop which will still be open to sell it to him.





# The Lands of Darmen

## Wyverntor

This castle and mine complex is one of the few stable settlements south of the Thelly, although bandits and Sunndi folk both menace the road headed north from here.

Deposits of rosy quartz, moonstones, and, quite freakishly, aquamarines are mined here. A handful of dwarves and gnomes, some slaves, supervise the mining work. Hired hands, convicts in chain gangs, and humanoids do most of the back-breaking labor.

The castle garrison comprises nearly 300 men, with 50 elite heavy cavalry and four wyvern riders forming the major defense. At least two mages are always posted here, and spells such as *invisibility 10' radius* are regularly used to protect or disguise gem-carrying cavalry squads headed north.

## Personalities of the Darmen Lands

**Princess Bersheben:** 9th-level thief (Dex 16, Int 17, Wis 15, Cha 16). AC 2 (*cloak of displacement, ring of protection +4*), hp 40, AL CE (NE). At 50, Bersheben is beginning to turn into something of a matriarch, and she resents the intrusion of late middle age. She is short and running to fat, which she tries to disguise with corsets and loose, flowing gowns. Her features are coarse, and she wears a copper-brown wig to cover her own graying and thinning hair. Very vain, Bersheba loves being a power broker, playing political games. Neither Xavener nor Harnnad knows truly where they stand with her. She remains inscrutable, her *amulet of proof against detection and location* helping with this.

Bersheba is a cruel woman, capable of having a housemaid flogged to insensibility for not polishing her make-up mirror to the point of perfection. Arrogant and insensitive, one of her most appalling practices is insisting on singing to visitors in a voice which sounds like a corncake infested with some painful parasite while accompanying herself on a mournful, tuneless accordion-like instrument.

**Prince Dilweg:** 8th-level fighter/9th-level mage (Str 18/16, Con 17, Int 17, Cha 16). AC -2 (*plate mail +2, shield +2*) or 10, hp 66, AL NE. Dilweg is only 23, and he is hot-headed and impetuous. He is handsome: his 5' 11" frame is well-muscled, and his brown curly hair is thick and lustrous. The prince's glittering green eyes make him the object of attraction to many females, and he indulges their attentions whenever possible.

Dilweg is ambitious. He knows how to fawn over Bersheba while pulling every string he can with Harnnad. He favors an alliance with the House of Cranden to oppose Naelax, and he has made some initial overtures (without great success) to the western lands. Dilweg's

major weakness is that he underestimates some of the problems House Darmen faces, being all too ready to dismiss them out of hand. To be sure, Ahlissa probably is no threat to Darmen—but the very possibility shouldn't be ruled out as casually and cavalierly as Dilweg does. However, his Charisma and his military role in the Greyhawk Wars give him real status with young princes. And a few Generals are coming round to his idea of a swift strike against Ivid while Rauxes is still in confusion. Dilweg also has been careful to court Darmen mages, making them feel better appreciated and sharing their feeling of being undervalued sympathetically.

**Prince Farland:** 12th-level fighter (Dex 16, Con 17, Wis 17, Cha 18). AC -8 (*plate mail +5, shield +5*), hp 97, AL LE. Farland is an old grandee of House Darmen. At 71, he improves with age as much as the fine wines he savors so much. His thick head of hair is still dark brown, and his short-cropped beard is unflecked with gray. His face is serene, almost kindly, but his dark brown eyes show the iron resolve which, combined with an endless patience, makes Farland the outstanding Darmen noble of his generation.

Farland believes passionately that Darmen's time has come to rule. He espouses Xavener's cause simply because he thinks Xavener is the best candidate. He has no desire to be overking himself. He knows that whoever rises to lead Darmen will need Bersheba's support, and their rivalry is too long, though friendly, for him to be able to obtain it.

He enjoys his power games with Bersheba. He enjoys talking to and instructing his spies and emissaries. The old man recruits allies where he can, but he is careful. And while polite and debonair he rarely trusts anyone too much. He always has contingency plans in case his first plan, and his back-up plan, fail. This man is the true brains behind Darmen's bid for the malachite throne. As kingmaker, Farland makes sure he protects himself with a retinue of 20 fighters of levels 5-9 and two mages around him or his rooms at all times.

Finally, his magnificent family heirloom, a bejewelled *longsword +5*, is said to be a thousand years old, and Farland makes sure it is very visible at all public and political engagements.

**Prince Harnnad:** 10th-level fighter (Str 18/40, Int 16). AC 2 (*chain mail +2*), hp 57, AL NE. Harnnad, at 35, is beginning to go to seed. His belly is too rounded from the ale he drinks to excess, and his face is starting to redden. He has never been good-looking, being only 5' 6" and having pudgy, fat fingers and features. His thin brown hair is greasy, and his gray eyes are reddened by the ale which broadens his girth. Harnnad has, in truth, never recovered from the loss of the woman he loved—his reason for hating Xavener. However, the prince has a

# The Lands of Darmen

powerful sense of duty, and Farland has left him no doubt that Xavener is the man to lead House Darmen to glory. His head tells him to support Xavener's suit; his heart cries to him that he will be damned if he will.

Harnnad has several magical items, not least due to the good agencies of Vlent, the 55-year-old fighter/mage (levels 11/9) who is the real power and ruler of Nulbish, and who is still loyal to Harnnad by virtue of his Lawful alignment. The most noteworthy is a magnificent *helm of comprehending languages and reading magic* said to be a 3,000-year-old Bakluni artifact, which also has the powers of *ESP* and *mind shielding*, as per the ring. Hence, it is hard to lie or conceal secrets when dealing with Harnnad, so his fellow princes are often wary of visiting Nulbish to deal with him.

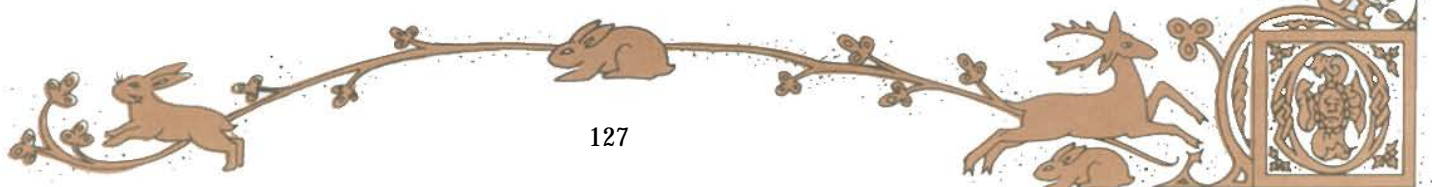
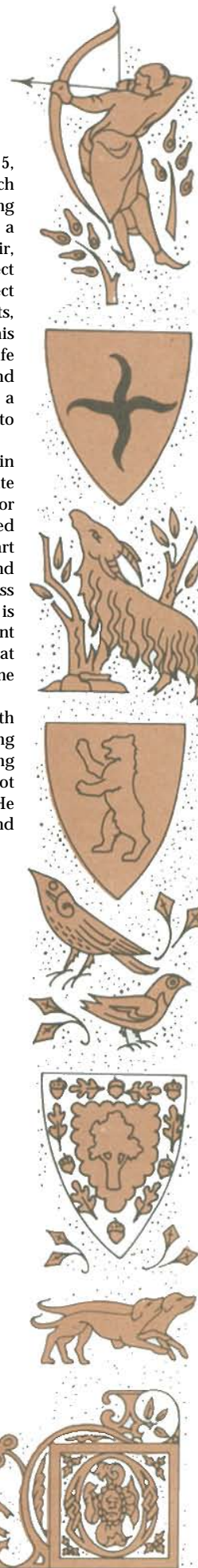
**Patriarch Larissen of Zilchus:** 19th-level priest (Wis 18, Cha 17). AC 0 (*chain mail +5*), hp 81, AL LN. Larissen is 66, 6' tall, slender, and slightly stooped. His balding pate is offset by splendid graying muttonchop side-whiskers, but he has a lined face and heavy bags below his gray eyes. Most of his wealth and magical items were lost in his flight from Rauxes, and the loss of his money in particular is a sore affliction for a patriarch of this faith. Larissen would like to begin work as a merchant in Kalstrand, but this would be almost accepting Xavener's coin to his mind, so he is somewhat lost for a current purpose.

Larissen isn't opposed to Xavener's claim to the malachite throne. Indeed, he believes it would be a boon if Darmen ascended to that. What annoys the old man is the feeling that he is being manipulated and taken for granted. Unsure of what to do, Larissen is in some danger of losing the respect of his peers unless he makes a clear and definitive proclamation soon.

**Prince Xavener:** 14th-level thief (Dex 18, Int 18, Wis 15, Cha 18). AC -1 (leather armor, *ring of protection +5* which also confers 10% magic resistance and +4 to saving throws versus illusions), hp 59, AL NE. Xavener is 37, a handsome man with perfect skin, light brown curly hair, hazel eyes, and a smile which seems to show more perfect white teeth than humans normally have. With his perfect manners, shows of modesty, and self-effacing comments, Xavener can also add an easy, light sense of humor to his social assets—in public, anyway. His beautiful wife Rachern is the envy of all men who look upon her, and with their 6-year-old twin daughters, this appears a charming family. Xavener is almost impossible to dislike—unless one sees behind the public appearance.

Xavener is consumed with ambition. He would, in truth, do or say almost anything to ascend the malachite throne. He would even betray his own royal house, or cast his daughters to the fiends of the Abyss to be ripped limb from limb if it would get him what his black heart craves so badly. Xavener longs for absolute power, and cares not who must suffer so long as he gets it. Heartless and cruel, this is a man virtually without a soul. But he is cunning, brilliant, and manipulative, and his only current regret is that he cannot assassinate Dilweg since that would throw House Darmen into uproar. And the blame would definitely be laid at his door.

Xavener is a psychopath. His unique ring, coupled with an *amulet of mind shielding* which blocks all mind-probing or mind-affecting spells, prevents anyone from knowing his true nature (and his wife, though evil herself, does not know the full measure of the monster she married). He would be a fitting replacement for Ivid, in his way, and infinitely more dangerous.







## South Province

Pop.: 520,000

Capital: Zelradton (pop. 10,000)

Ruler: Graf Reydrich

Rulership: Medium (high in cities)

Cost Multiplier: 125%

### A Land of Intrigues

South Province, or Ahlissa, has for many decades been a land of political intrigues, treachery, and nepotism. It always has been divided into a larger number of smaller fiefs than most of the Great Kingdom, and there is no dominant royal house here. Naelax and Darmen are the largest, but South Province is a patchwork quilt of competing, rival nobles of all houses. Backstabbing (metaphorical and literal), petty feuding, and even prolonged outbreaks of major land conflicts have been the staple fare of the noble life here.

For nearly 30 years, three rulers of the same name—Herzog Chelor—kept Ahlissa stable. They did this through repression and fear of the magical power and fiendish aid which both they, and their relative the overking, could bring to bear on any rebelling against them.

Since South Province lacked any truly powerful nobles, with large landholdings and powerful armies, the Chelors stayed in control.

Ivid executed the third Chelor during the Greyhawk Wars, a fair reward for his cousin's dithering. Indeed, most of the Naelax-Selor House perished with the Chelors at the hands of Ivid's executioners and assassins. Ahlissan armies did not readily march to war against Nyrond, and they suffered humiliating defeats at the hands of Ossoon of Almor. This was, indeed, a pitiful display by the Herzog's armies. For some years before the wars, Ahlissan armies had threatened the Iron League nations, and Chelor had built a powerful standing army around the Province.

In mitigation, it must be said that Ossoon's attack was wholly unexpected.

At the height of Ossoon's invasion, Chelor begged aid from his cousin. The army which arrived was too late to deal with Ossoon, but it also had orders to detain Chelor. The Herzog and most of his senior advisers were brought to Ivid and summary justice was dispensed.

Among those advisers was Reydrich, Chelor's archmage and himself a prince of the House of Naelax. Reydrich denounced Chelor to Ivid, and saved his own skin in the process. On the highly dubious grounds that his brother was an admiral of the Prymp fleet, Reydrich was pronounced ruler of the province. If this seems an extraordinary happening, one has to remember that Ivid is insane. Reydrich seemed the only major Ahlissan noble who was not obviously conspiring against him.

Reydrich consolidated his position swiftly. All Chelor's ex-cronies were swiftly eliminated. Many were said to

have been sent to Rauxes to suffer the Endless Death. By doing this, Reydrich made himself undisputed head of the House of Naelax in Ahlissa. Secondly, he spread general fear among all the nobles of the province; the mage clearly had the ear of the overking. In point of fact, few of Reydrich's rounded-up victims ever reached Rauxes; the story that they met with the most dreaded of all punishments was a rumor spread by Reydrich's servants. Most of them were simply executed by Reydrich himself.

Reydrich took two further steps to cement his dominance. He carefully gained the support of the military generals and commanders of Ahlissa. Second, he made it known that he, like the overking, had dealings with fiends. Now, since Reydrich had been to Rauxes and returned—and Chelor had been executed—and since Reydrich, like Ivid, had dealings with fiends, most nobles readily accepted that Reydrich was clearly favored by Ivid. That gave Reydrich enough time to make sure he had Ahlissa secure as his own fief.

Since the Greyhawk Wars, Reydrich has remained reasonably firmly in control. There are none to offer him serious opposition. The archmage sits secure in Zelradton and is reasonably content. He has no interest in the malachite throne. Ahlissa is a fertile and fair fief, and the land is large enough for his ambitions (at least, so far). On a personal whim, he has resurrected the archaic title of Graf.

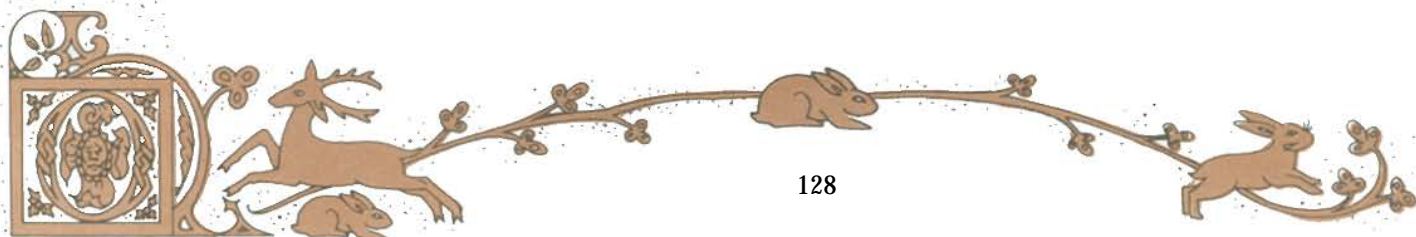
However, many little princelings are quietly carving up little portions of Ahlissa for themselves. Some fight each other to expand their dominions. Some make quiet alliances with foreign forces. Many of the Darmen princes occupying lands west of the Thelly have made it quietly known to Xavener that they will support his bid for the malachite throne if he secures and expands their landholdings in Ahlissan.

Finally, Reydrich is not just an archmage who has emerged from nowhere. He served all three Chelors, and his own ancestors are steeped in the history of this land. He can trace his family line back more than 400 years, to mages as grim as Reynevar the Snakeheaded and Allreyren the Gripper. He has tomes filled with the genealogies and histories of all the princes of the land. While fortunate fate may have brought Reydrich to rulership, he is not ill-prepared for it.

### Around the Land

South Province has many neighbors, and Reydrich is much occupied with thoughts of how to deal with them. West, the affairs of House Darmen do not occupy him too much. He has refused to ally with that house to overthrow Ivid, and he considers Darmen no threat.

To the north, the ravaged lands around Almor give Reydrich and the nobles living nearby some pause for



# South Province

thought. Reydrich is inclined to support House Cranden. And while thoroughly evil himself, he supplies Prince Carwend of Rel Deven with little in the way of aid and information. He sees Rel Deven as a vital buffer between Ahlissa and the fiendish force of Almor, and this policy has found favor with the petty nobles of the lands adjoining Rel Deven.

Along Relmor Bay, South Province is engaged in a sporadic piratical war with Nyronde. The fleets of Prymp and Shargallen raid southern Nyronde, seeking slaves, plunder, and food. In return, Nyronde vessels raid Ahlissa's northern coast and, indeed, mounted a major raid on Prymp itself in Coldeven. This piracy is still relatively small-scale because neither side seeks all-out war and neither has a truly dominant fleet. Still, this gives Reydrich concern. For one thing, building up defenses such as city walls is expensive, and local rulers demand help with such constructions which Reydrich is loath to give.

It is to the south and west that South Province has most problems. Southeast, beyond the long spur of the Hollow Highlands, lies Sunndi. The folk of that free land have no liking for the rulers and nobles of South Province. The tract of land between the Grayflood and the Rieuwood is hard for Reydrich to defend. Indeed, he has decided to abandon it, building the Grayflood Keeps as a fall-back defensive line.

Reydrich seeks an alliance with the beleaguered dwarves of Irongate. This is for the simple reason that, should Irongate fall, South Province would then have a very long border with lands in the grip of the Scarlet Brotherhood. This is a situation which Reydrich fears above all. As yet, the Brotherhood fleet in Onnwal has not menaced South Province, and Reydrich has not discovered any spies of the Brotherhood in his land. But he knows very well how the Brotherhood acts, and he knows that if Irongate falls, South Province will be impossibly vulnerable.

The dwarves of Irongate have greeted Ahlissan emissaries with great uncertainty. Certainly, the food South Province can offer is badly needed, but they don't trust Reydrich an inch. There is a long history of disputes, skirmishes, even major battles in the Iron Hills fought between the dwarves and the rulers of South Province. Reydrich is too new a ruler for the dwarves to change their minds about matters in such a short space of time.

South Province's position is thus not an easy one. It is ringed with enemies and uncertainties. The only advantage Reydrich has is that he does, at least, know accurately who those enemies are, and he has generally acted wisely in his short period of rulership to take precautions against them.

## Exiles and Factions

The population of South Province has actually grown by nearly a third from pre-war days. Many people have fled here from Almor, troubled central lands, and even as far away as Medegia.

These exiles have brought problems with them. While Ahlissa is fertile and large enough to support them, they have been ruthlessly exploited by landowners and even peasant farmers live as little better than slaves. Some of them actually are slaves, and are rounded up as such by local armies and militias. Diseases have followed these refugees, and the more desperate of them have resorted to theft, burglary, and even banditry. By and large, the exiles are not strong enough to be an important threat, and few were able to bring many belongings with them, so they pose little threat to public order. But some have, in turn, fled Ahlissa and settled in the lands south of the Grayflood. There, in alliance with Sunndi folk, they are an increasing menace.

So far as power factions other than the nobility go, the military are the dominant power. South Province has always maintained large armies and has a fair naval force and sizeable, well-trained militias. The province's generals are men of power. The commanding generals have a secret society all of their own, with secret meetings, symbolic handshake greetings, and other trappings. To them, loyalty to their fellows is more important than any house affiliations.

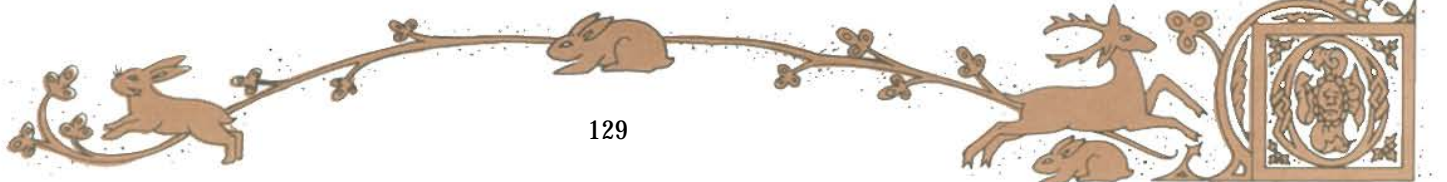
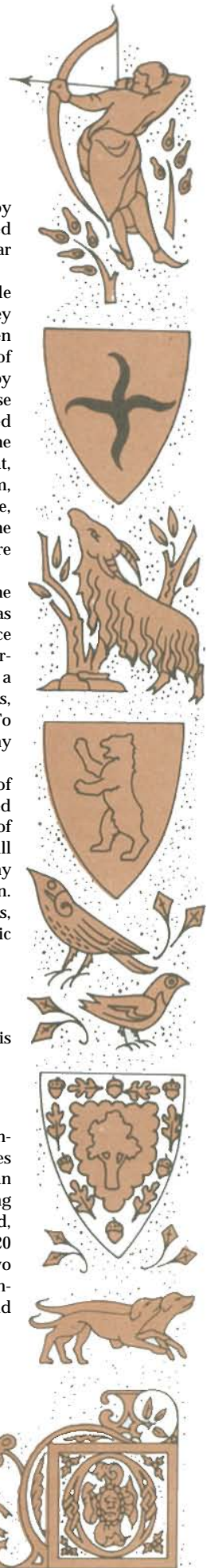
There is no dominant priesthood. The full range of Aerdy priesthoods can be found, save for good-aligned ones. But Chaotic faiths are strongly disapproved of (Reydrich, the Chelors, and the military leaders all strongly tend to Lawful alignments). Neither is there any strong secular faction such as the merchants of Darmen. Rather, individual areas may have strong local factions, but these are usually down to powerful and charismatic individuals rather than any strong organization.

## Locations and Settlements

Half of the Bonewood is within South Province, but this location is detailed in the following chapter.

### Benkend

Benkend is a sizeable village of 2,000 which has traditionally been an important recruiting-post for mercenaries and soldiers from the Thelwood. Now it is both an important trading post with Rel Deven and a spying station for keeping watch on Rel Deven, the Bonewood, and Almor. It is also a hotbed of intrigue, for within 20 miles there are Naelax, Darmen, Cranden, and two Torquann princes who continually struggle for ascendancy and the right to extract tolls along the roads to and





# South Province

from this busy place.

Prince Quaansheek, one of the Torquann princes whose lands lie southeast of the village, is known to have a magical war banner which his heavy cavalry employ. This gives bonuses to morale and to charging speed for cavalry, and is also said to grant temporary immunity to magical *fear*.

The course of the roadway to the west of the village is diverted some three miles south of the original route, for a stretch of 12 miles or so. The old roadway is still clearly visible as overgrown tracks, and at intervals along it there are gigantic humanoid footprints, an inch deep and more than a yard in length. These are said to have simply appeared overnight a hundred or so years ago, and some locals say they fill with blood as an omen of dire warning. This happened just before Chelor's abduction by Ivid's armies, and on the night before Chathold was razed to the ground. What form of being made them, and when they will again convey their gruesome warning, is unknown.

Strange and wondrous beasts have been reported stalking this old roadway by night, and the track radiates a dim abjuration magic.

## The Calling Mines

Guarded by 400 Hexpools army men, this silver mine brings vital money into that city. The miners here are mostly slaves, with a small handful of captured Sunndi dwarves and gnomes among them.

The mines take their name from the eerie, faint voices which whisper to the miners in the deeper and richer mine shafts. Perhaps a quarter of those who work here come to hear them; most do not, and there does not seem to be any obvious reason why only some hear these voices. Everyone who does hears something different. Some hear the calling of a dread ghost or malign spirit. Others hear *svirfnebli* calling that they will come to rescue them. Some hear the seductive voices of succubi and recoil in terror. The mines claim many lives through accident and the occasional monster, but they claim as many minds as they do bodies, for many become insane here.

No one knows the true nature of the creatures doing the calling or, indeed, whether there truly are any. All manner of wild rumors concern these beings, and tales of the magic and/or treasure which may lie below the mine shafts circulate in the lands around.

## The Grayflood Keeps

Three stone keeps are in the process of construction at the sites shown on the map. Two more are planned farther east along this river. Slave labor is used for building, together with convicts. Because speed is deemed to be vital, mages use *levitation* and *Tenser's floating disc* spells

to speed up building work. Half of them are low-level mercenaries, many being apprentices fleeing the wrath of their masters for some reason or another (such as fleeing with a choice selection of master's spell books, hoping to sell them for badly needed gold).

If an adventurer wanted to hear interesting tales about some of Aerdy's more powerful mid-level mages, pouring plenty of ale or wine down the throat of these malcontents would be a good way to go about it.

South of these keeps, with their strong garrisons, the lands are increasingly anarchic. While South Province patrols still try to protect the richer and more fertile farmsteads, the border lands of the Glorioles, Rieuwood, and Hollow Highlands all offer excellent shelter for bandits, Sunndi raiders, army deserters, and worse. There have been several reports of monsters, possibly liberated by the Scarlet Brotherhood, including warped and mutated creatures of real ferocity. A mantichore with poisonous spines and a fringe of venomous snakes around the crown of its head was destroyed recently, and its head is mounted in the feast hall of the westernmost keep. Little wonder that Reydrich desires to fall back to the readily defensible position these keeps will offer, when completed.

## Hexpools

Hexpools is an extraordinary sight. Its great limestone walls stand 30' high, and while some 11,000 people live here, the city is larger than most holding three times this number.

Dominating the city are the famed hexpools themselves. There are six of these, arranged in a hexagon pattern around the margins of the city and within its walls. Each is a hexagon of limestone, some 100' from side to side, with 10' high walls with the pool sunk some 30' into the ground. A complex of fountains and aqueducts rings each great pool. Elemental magic draws up great streams of water from underground aquifers and powers the fountains and waterwheels which in turn power the mills of the city.

Most of the water is removed from the city through great ducts to form the headwaters of the Grayflood, but some is forced upward by magical means so that the battlements of the city walls have powered water streams running their full length both in carved channels and in pipes built into the walls. The latter can be accessed through valves, and if the city were to be attacked its defenders can, in effect, use high-powered water cannons to assault attackers getting too close to the formidable walls of the city.

This powerful complex of water magic was built into the city by the mage Farlockend nearly 300 years ago. Statues of the mage can be found in many places in Hexpools, and he is almost a local saint. Mention of his

## South Province

name is always followed by an incantation of "blessings on him!" Farlockend's descendants administer Hexpools as an hereditary aristocratic council. Such is Farlockend's fame and reputation that no matter how inept they become no Hexpooler will rebel against them. To do so, they believe, will ensure that Farlockend's magic will turn against them, perhaps drowning every soul in the city overnight.

The need for these defenses, and the 1,200 troops here, grows monthly as refugees and Sunndi forces, especially dwarves, grow more daring from their bases in the Hollow Highlands and the lands south of the Grayflood. Hexpools' rulers actively seek mercenary bounty hunters to destroy these enemies. About 200 evil mercenaries—a collection of small adventuring groups, some groups of army deserters from central Aerdy, and even a squad of 16 orcs and half-orcs led by a plate-clad orog on a monstrous black stallion—can be found here.

# Icespire

This keep, with its lighthouse and *continual light* beacon, is now deserted. Until 20 years ago, this was a manned beacon for vessels headed into or from the Sea of Gearnat, but a mage attending the magical beacon ventured into the caves south of the keep and discovered something which transformed the place. The 120 people at Icespire were slain in an instant and the place frozen into a mausoleum. Chelor sent a strong force to investigate; only two of them returned, both insanely babbling. Magical scrying attempts also resulted in those casting the divination spells to suffering traumatic amnesia, madness, and even death. Now Icespire stands, as its name suggests, as a pinnacle of blue ice, gleaming in the sun. The temperature is desperately cold (-50 C) for several miles south of the keep, and no one has ventured into this forbidding promontory for many years.

## Ker Bazainn

This grim fortress has guarded the land passage between the hills, south to Idee, for more than two centuries. Now it is a vital strategic guard against the forces of the Scarlet Brotherhood, and around the castle two keeps and curtain walls are being constructed by Reydrich to form a defensive bastion.

Ker Bazainn is a six-towered castle which is both evil and magical in itself. During its construction, the blood and ichor of many creatures—human, humanoid, magical monsters and (so it is said) fiends—saturated the limestone blocks used for building. Certainly, the castle has powerful defenses against fire, acid, impacting siege weapons and the like. One tale tells of a powerful priest of Beory using an *earthquake* spell to afflict the castle after a deranged noble there had sacrificed hundreds of souls on its grim stones, only to find that the castle levitated

and then resettled on safe ground. This is probably another tall story, but the brooding fortress surely has many secrets within it.

What is known for certain is that 2,000 troops are stationed here, though at any one time probably a third of that number patrol the lands around. There are also fiends in Ker Bazainn said to have been summoned by Reydrich himself. To date, only abishai and barbazu have been seen, but recent reports of a creature very like a gelugon have filtered back to distant lands.

One of Reydrich's apprentices, Tarrak, lives full-time at Ker Bazainn and has clearly been at work tapping the magic of the place. Broiling acidic mists and fetid *stinking clouds* have been seen rolling southward, but stopping short of penetrating too far into Idee. Tarrak's true nature is unknown to most, for the mage enjoys using alteration spells to appear as a drow, an orc, a male human, or even as an ogre. She is known to have captive charmed monster companions, including a pair of leucrotta which she uses as hunting animals—usually to pursue human or demihuman quarry.

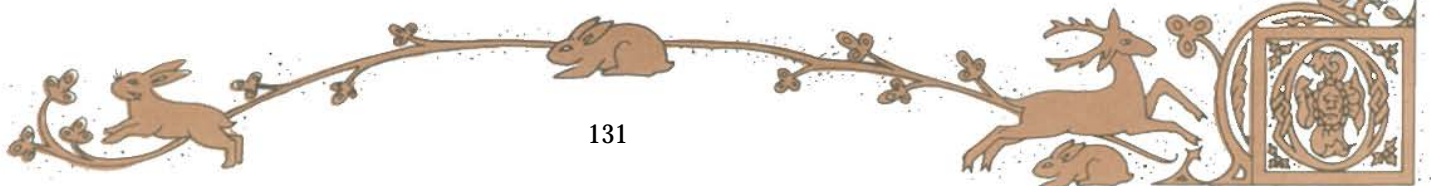
Ker Bazainn is further defended by a pack of 40 or so wolfhound/worg crosses with the statistics of worgs. These animals are superbly well-trained and utterly ferocious (Morale 15). The strength of this place is testimony to how deeply Reydrich fears the Scarlet Brotherhood. It is also a prison. Reydrich generally does not execute those who oppose him, considering that they might be useful as hostages, for ransom, or that their loyalty might after all be gained through "encouragement" in the dungeons of this place.

## The Lantern Road (Ports)

This long, sweeping coastal road is aptly named. For centuries this coast has been a haven for smugglers and pirates, guiding vessels into small coves and bays by lantern signalling. In more recent times beacons of *continual light* have been installed and maintained at the Lantern Ports as the villages and small towns along the coast are collectively known. Piracy and smuggling are still commonplace here. The increasing power of the Scarlet Brotherhood has made the local seamen more fearful of traveling too far west, into the Azure Sea to the Wild Coast they once raided, or to points beyond. Now, most of them raid southern Nyrond, or even each other.

Several villages and towns are shown on the map. These are deliberately left for the DM to develop as small settlements. They are all dangerous places, with many of Chaotic Evil alignment in particular. In addition to pirates and smugglers, bandits, assassins, and thieves are commonplace. Life is cheap indeed in these settlements.

From time to time, one of the Ahlissan navy vessels from the larger bases at Prymp, Shargallen, or Trennenport will be anchored in the bay, re-provisioning or





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chasing a pirate who had the audacity to raid another Ahlissan port. However, there are no permanent naval stations in these ports; even the Ahlissan navy, half of whom have a piratical past themselves, fear to spend a night in one of these nasty little backwaters.

### Prymp

A walled city of 16,300 people, Prymp is the major base for the Ahlissan navy. At any given time, half the Ahlissan force of 22 cogs and coasters, seven galleys, and four galleons are either here or within a day's sailing time of the city. Keeping close to port is a reaction to the Nyron-dese raid on Prymp earlier this year (585 CY). Fleet Admiral Llarnen is a cautious man by nature in any event.

Prymp is a cruel, harsh city. It always has been administered by a military council, comprising the ruler of South Province, the Fleet Admiral, and the commander-general of the Ahlissan armies, General Reynard. The similarity of name to Reydrich is coincidental.

Law here is military-based, and the rulership level for this city is high. Prymp is a major center for the vile trade of slavery, and in truth virtually anything is for sale here, including the loyalty of many of its mercenary and black-hearted defenders. Many are ex-slaves, pirates of old, or simply chaotic and utterly untrustworthy souls held in check by the rigid Lawfulness of the city's rulers.

Prymp never has been a decorative or pleasant city, and after the damage caused by the Nyron-dese the city verges on the decrepit in many areas. There are still ruined buildings, fire-scorched areas toasted by the *fireballs* of Nyron-dese mages, and worse. Some back streets of Prymp are little better than open sewers. Evil cults flourish here, whether it be the notorious assassins' guild of the city or furtive and unspeakable rites practiced by devotees of Nerull or other such deities in the squalid and neglected city cemetery. Prymp's undercity is extensive and even more dangerous than the streets above. A complex and extensive series of underground ducts for draining away high tidal waters combines with burial vaults, natural fissures in the limestone bedrock, and secret passages used by assassins and worse to form a huge area of only partly-mapped caverns, tunnels, and vaults. Some of these areas are permanently underwater, others flood occasionally. Monsters such as ropers, various forms of cave lizards, moray eels, cave fishers, and others infest some areas of the Undercity, while some claim that there is a deep and interdicted nest of Kuo-toa far below the city. There are even tales of an underwater complex occupied by a lich and undead very like sea zombies.

Treasure and magic still draw the brave or foolhardy into this dangerous territory. Among those reputed treasures, there is known to be a sacred relic of Pholtus,

warded and sealed up here by the last of a desperate priesthood chased into the farthest recesses of the Undercity by pursuing assassins in Ivid's employ. It is believed to be a cloak, granting the wearer (if a faithful follower of Pholtus) *protection from evil 10' radius*, a +4 bonus against all spells and spell-like effects cast by evil enemies, and other benefits. The cloak is important enough to have attracted the interest of Mitrik, but an adventuring group sent in disguise in Fireseek of the current year to fetch it did not return. This relic, and who knows what else, is still there for those valiant enough to seek it.

### Shargallen and Trennenport

These two small towns are very alike. Both are walled, have similar populations (2,900 in the western port, 3,100 in Shargallen), and both are important secondary naval bases. Shargallen is most noteworthy for a small sect of worshipers of Beltar, who have an unparalleled knowledge of the coastal caves the length of the Relmor Bay coastline. Several of them still hold buried treasures, caches of gold left by pirates who never lived to return to claim them, and a festering evil of some kind—a necromancer's cavernous laboratory, perhaps, or some malign minor magical artifact.

Trennenport, on the other hand, is a busier port, not least because of its proximity to Onnwal. As the major western port along the coastline, its walls and defenses are being strengthened, and there is something very unusual being done underneath the sea walls. A force of nearly 100 sahuagin are commanded by the sinister mage Bortwimn here. They constantly dive into the shoreline waters, fetching and carrying stone, strangely-shaped and rune-etched plaques, and other oddities. Exactly what is being built below the waters is unknown, and heavily-armed troops discourage any over-curious soul from getting anywhere close enough to find out.

### Zelradton

Zelradton is not a large city, though its population has been swollen with an influx of refugees. But it is a mighty one, and it is the center of power of South Province. Historically, the Aerdi established the city as a military stronghold, defending the unnamed silver and iron mines in the fringes of the Hollow Highlands.

For centuries, raids were made from here into the Iron Hills, seeking dwarven treasures and slaves, and adventurers from the city brought fame and wealth back from the passage-ridden, cavernous Hollow Highlands. There are more tales of famous dungeon exploits in Zelradton than in any other Aerdy city, because of the proximity of two hill ranges with their treasures of old. Nowadays, the Hollow Highlands have been exhausted of minerals, treasures and tall tales.

Reydrich, ruler of the city, lives in a majestic tower

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which has been built within the past year. Since it is 140' high, and doubtless has extensive dungeons, it is clear that he must have had magical aid in its construction. The slaves, dwarves, and trio of stone giants Reydrich recruited from some unknown place could not have finished the work so swiftly. Indeed, Reydrich made sure that visiting princes saw the dergholoths at work inside the place, their five-armed bodies and great strength being very useful in carrying and lifting immense weights. Reydrich let it be known that these horrors were just the tip of the iceberg, and that more powerful fiendish aid was on hand. It got his tower built, and it made sure the princes had a healthy respect for the archmage-ruler.

The great armies of Zelradton dominate the city. Little used in the wars, they remain in good morale and determination. Among their leaders, the talk is of the threat to the Scarlet Brotherhood and the need to strike against Onnwal and Idee. There is a general view that, if these lands could be annexed, it would protect Ahlissa from the Brotherhood and secure a valuable naval base, Scant, and eventually allow the army to annex Irongate as well. Because the army doesn't have a great deal to do, such fighting talk is on the increase.

All this does not go unnoticed by the Brotherhood. They have a key spy here, the inquisitioner of the city, Karnquiza. The inquisitioner is an important post historically; this man is responsible for ferreting out the ruler's enemies and then "interrogating" them. He also administers the city's forbidding and grim prison with its chained and shackled penal slaves used for building work and stone-breaking. The average prisoner has a life expectancy of less than 18 months, so most people here have a healthy respect for the law.

Reydrich is suspicious of Karnquiza, not because he has any evidence of his treachery, but because he instinctively distrusts anyone with so much power. Rather than act directly against him, what Reydrich has done is to appoint his own relatives to be "understudies" and assistants to Karnquiza. Thus, the city's assistant head jailer is one of his cousins, while his nephew Tarannis has been appointed as a liaison between the army and Karnquiza in his intelligence-gathering role.

Thus, the wily Graf cramps Karnquiza's scope for action. Karnquiza's position grows very difficult, for he has so much covert activity as a spy and also as the Hidden Sickles of the cult of Midnight Darkness. His lengthy entry in the personalities section below gives further details.

Because Zelradton is home to the Ahlissan ruler, and is so militarily powerful, the city is awash with spies and representatives of other Aerdy factions. Xavener of Kalstrand keeps a staff of three diplomats and several hulking bodyguards, ever seeking to recruit Reydrich to his cause—or at least to make sure the Graf remains

neutral. A military attache from Rel Deven with his staff are here to discuss integrating patrols around the Bonewood, and also to negotiate division of toll payments along the roads between the cities.

The most noteworthy recent addition to this number is the dwarf Cragden Keephand, an invited emissary from Irongate. Reydrich is actively courting Irongate as an ally, because he feels that if Irongate falls to the Scarlet Brotherhood then Ahlissa would be severely threatened. Cragden is aware that while Reydrich may be sincere in this view, there are many army leaders here who see Irongate as a very desirable bastion and seek to eventually conquer it.

The Irongate dwarves decided to send their emissary simply because it gave them an agent in Zelradton who could keep them informed of events in the city. Cragden has mercenary spies in Zelradton, paid with Irongate gold. PCs seeking a dangerous and intriguing time here could find him a rewarding employer.

Zelradton is a city waiting for momentous events to pass. With a large and increasingly restless army seeking glory and battle, spies, fiends, agents of Nerull and more, this frontier city offers a considerable scope for PCs.

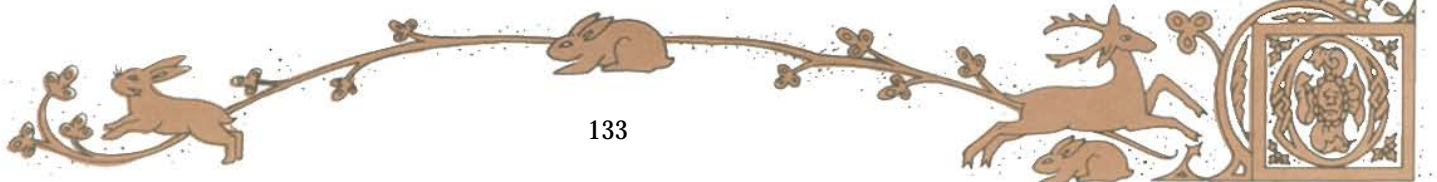
### Personalities of South Province

#### The Military

**Fleet Admiral Llarnen:** 14th-level fighter (Str 17, Int 17, Cha 15). AC 1 (*chain mail of command* +4, shield not used), hp 80, AL NE. Llarnen is Reydrich's brother, and is loyal to him simply because he knows that Reydrich must trust him, and it favors him to have a brother as ruler. Exactly 50 years of age, Llarnen is 5' 11", of medium build, with wavy brown hair flecked with gray and hazel eyes. He is rather fond of his impressive uniforms, and he is something of a fop. His record as a naval commander is not one of glory and triumph, but it is also one unmarred by serious military blunders—and in Aerdy that is unusual. Owner of a *bow* commanding *water elementals* specifically made for him by Reydrich, and usable by a fighter, Llarnen's kudos is further increased by his *scimitar* +4 which allows him to *water walk* once a day for 12 turns and also to create *airy water* once a day for the same duration.

Llarnen is cruel, hated by his men for the floggings he prescribes so liberally. He is also rich, from piracy and the sale of slaves. His home contains overflowing chests of gold and trinkets from around all the oceans of Oerth. Many have tried to ransack it, but few have come away even with their lives.

**General Reynard:** 19th-level fighter (Str 18/97, Con 18, Wis 17, Cha 17). AC -2 or better (*plate mail* +5 of *missile repulsion*, see below; shield not used), hp 152, AL LE.





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"Reynard the Fox" is an overused expression, but it fits this wily old brute perfectly. Reynard is 78 years old, but he has a magical homunculus crafted by Chelor's old archmage (with fiendish aid) which, so long as it survives, gives him almost perfect longevity. On the first day of the year, the homunculus must drain the life force of a sentient adult demihuman in an especially grim ritual. Then Reynard will not age for the forthcoming year. However, there is a 5% chance the ritual fails and Reynard ages normally. Thanks to this magic, Reynard is physically only in his mid-30s. Not knowing his true secret, some whisper that he is a vampire, or a fiend in human form.

Standing 6' 8", the powerfully-built general has wavy brown hair and eyes which are dark brown—almost black when he treats someone to his infamous, fixing stare. His magical black lacquered plate mail gives him an additional -4 AC bonus against all missile fire and has further powers; it allows him a saving throw vs. spells to negate the effects of an *arrow of slaying*, it grants *free action*, and provides a +4 to saving throws versus illusion/phantasm spells. Reynard also owns a bone-hilted *vorpal bastard sword* with the powers of detecting enemies and *sharpness*, a fearsome weapon which he claims was taken from the Hells themselves.

Reynard is of the House of Naelax, but he spurns almost all of his kin. He believes the house has grown weak and effete and has degenerated into madness. Viciously puritanical, Reynard considers Reydrich a better lot altogether, since he is clearly eager to treat the army well and has made it clear to Reynard that war against Onnwal or Idee must come within two years at the most. Reynard is eager for battle now, having been prevented by Chelor from any overexertion in the Greyhawk wars.

Reynard is probably the finest general Aerdy has known for decades, even centuries. He was a prime target for Ivid's revivification program, but Chelor prevented Reynard from attending the overking—the only good thing Chelor ever did in Reynard's eyes. Reynard is a dangerous, brutally evil disciplinarian whose armies are thoroughly drilled and disciplined, and as a leader he strikes fear into all who oppose him. He is a master military strategist and historian, and he owns the finest collection of books on all aspects of warfare, from mythic histories of ancient Oeridian, Suel, and Bakluni civilizations down to memoirs of his best predecessors. That collection of tomes alone is almost priceless.

### Midnight Darkness

The position of this group in Zelradton is peculiar and dangerous. Preceptor Erkann is based here; he knows of Jipzinker in Rauxes, while in turn Plandarn Relshefer of Edge Field is aware of Erkann's identity. However,

Karnquiza is also in the city, his true identity known to none of the preceptors. This allows Karnquiza to observe Erkann, and to get most of what he wants done indirectly through Erkann. Since Karnquiza is responsible for most of the "civilian surveillance" in Zelradton, it is thus easy for him to shield Erkann.

**Erkann the Antiquary:** 11th-level thief (Dex 17, Int 16). AC 1 (*leather armor +4*), hp 41, AL NE. Erkann became a devotee of Nerull after having his alignment magically altered by contact with an artifact of the deity, and was guided by visions to make contact with Jipzinker who drew him into Nerull's killing cult. Previously, the 38-year-old thief had fronted as a collector and dealer in antiquities while following his chosen profession of burglary (and he still possesses a remarkable array of specialized items assisting this craft). Slightly built at 5' 7" and of unnoteworthy appearance, Erkann had a reputation around Zelradton as a man worth seeing if one had an interest in bric-a-brac, curios, and trinkets from far-off lands. If he didn't have what one was looking for, he probably knew something about it. (DM note: allow Erkann bardic proficiency in legend lore for any obscure magical, or historical, items.)

Erkann's career as a killer has been slow to develop, but his current targets are the dwarves who now trade a little with Zelradton and visitors from the western lands whom he suspects of being of good alignments. He is still tense and nervous before his slayings, since he is neither strong nor especially swift. But the homicidal mania which grips him is only partly allayed by his visits to the gladiatorial pits of Zelradton to watch slaves fighting to the death.

**Karnquiza:** 15th-level thief (Str 16, Dex 18, Int 18, Wis 16). AC -6 (*bracers of defense AC 2, cloak of protection +4*), hp 60, AL NE. Karnquiza is 49 years old, 5' 11", of medium build, with lustrous black hair and green eyes. He has a battery of magical items, including *rings of free action* and *invisibility*, an *amulet of proof against detection and location*, a *bag of tricks* and a *short sword +4* with the powers of *detect lie* three times a day and casting *undetectable lie* likewise three times a day. Karnquiza is a complex man in a very delicate situation, for he has three roles: inquisitor of the city, Hidden Sickle of Nerull, and a spy for the Scarlet Brotherhood!

As inquisitor, Karnquiza is both overseer of Zelradton's jails and of a force of some 20 thieves and fighters who act as spies around the city, and they have their own hirelings. His job is to root out any opposition to the city's ruler. When the ruler changes, Karnquiza calmly hunts down enemies of the new one. He's seen enough changes of rulers to grow philosophical about it. However, as Reydrich has appointed "assistants" to him, his room for maneuver has become sharply reduced.

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As Nerull's Hidden Sickie, Karnquiza's history is a strange one. Shortly after he took up his post as inquisitor (slaying the previous incumbent during a transition of Chelors, as it were), a senior priest of Nerull visited him and converted him to the faith. The conversion was gradual, following an original charismatic effect on the priest's part. Karnquiza grew to love the power of life or death he held over the city's people, to enjoy the nefarious means by which he could bring the high down, and the extension of his power across Aerdy through his preceptors. He came to believe that there was no one, no matter what his station, he could not have tortured or slain. Such lust for power endeared him to Nerull, and Karnquiza went about his work with relish.

This abruptly changed only six months past. In his heavily-guarded rooms above the city jail, Karnquiza was awakened in the middle of the night by three scarlet-robed assassins holding blades to his throat. In the background was a nameless thing; Karnquiza assumes it was a fiend, but he shudders even to think of it now. His choice was simple—serve the Brotherhood and accept a *geas* into the bargain or be taken away to Kro Terlep and suffer a fate worse than the Endless Death. Karnquiza decided swiftly to change his allegiance. Now, he uses Erkann—without his realizing it—to convey messages to the Brotherhood through an intricate pattern of signalling involving placement of goods in his shop window and signs on items.

Unfortunately for Karnquiza, it appears that this has not gone unmarked by Nerull. In the past month, Karnquiza's body has begun to rot and shrivel. Since this has only extended to his abdomen to date, he can cover it up, though the amount of perfume the man is forced to use to disguise the stench of his putrescent flesh is increasing by the day. He suffers periodic excruciating pain from this, but mostly the affected area is anaesthetic. Karnquiza fears that he is being turned into some ghastly undead horror, and has begged Nerull for forgiveness. The Reaper does not appear to have heard him, and Karnquiza goes on supplying information about events, locations, and visitors in Zelradton to them.

This ineffably evil man is in a desperate plight. He will do anything, hire anyone, to save his skin. Any PCs duped into helping him will find themselves enmeshed with agents of the Brotherhood and Nerull, not to mention Reydrich's watchful spies. This is an adventure for high-level and smart PCs only!

### Other Personalities

**Cragden Keephand:** 8th-level dwarf fighter (Str 17, Con 17, Int 17). AC 1 (*dwarven chain mail* +3), hp 79, AL LN. Cragden is the emissary of Irongate in Zelradton. He is 178 years old, 4' 3", barrel-chested and slightly bow-legged. He wears his black hair fairly short, and his

beard trimmed short. His ferrety black-brown eyes give him a furtive look, but he is an honest and principled dwarf.

Cragden knows he is in a den of intrigue and wickedness in Reydrich's city. His task is to learn all he can of the place, while knowing all the while that he is being watched. His *ring of invisibility* helps little in this respect, since mages are among those spying on him, but his gold bracelet (allowing him to *dimension door* four times a day) allows him to throw them off the scent now and again. Cragden is eager for any who will serve as his eyes and ears; he has a couple of petty thieves in his employ and some street brats who often learn more about comings and goings in the city than any adult could.

Cragden is also eager to hire trustworthy (Lawfully aligned) bodyguards for the cautious Irongate traders who have begun to bring their goods to Zelradton. They fetch good prices, and if the place is evil, well, gold is gold, as any dwarf will tell you.

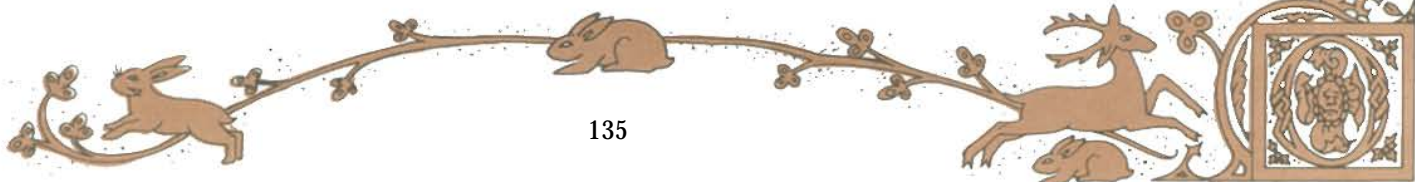
**Graf Reydrich:** 19th-level mage (Int 18, Wis 17). AC 0 (*black robes of the archmagi*, *ring of protection* +5), hp 31, AL NE (LE). Reydrich is 60 years old, a pencil-thin 6' man with cropped steely gray hair and watery gray eyes. He limps fairly heavily; his left leg is withered from an old magical curse which even a *wish* spell could not remove. His *staff of power* is not just used for magic; it is a stout hornwood stave, and supports the archmage as he walks. The staff itself is a grisly thing, carved with gargoyle faces and leering visages, and it is said to need blood to recharge it.

Reydrich is no absent-minded old mage. He is as hard as steel, holding to life and power with an utterly tenacious grip. He never has been seen to smile; the deep lines on his frowning face are evidence of that. His expression seems frozen into one of permanent disapproval and harsh judgment.

Reydrich has been court mage to the Chelors for 19 years before his ascension to rule, and he knows the factions and forces of Zelradton better than even Karnquiza himself. He is politically highly astute, and he knows the value of nepotism in achieving his ends.

Reydrich deals with fiends, primarily baatezu whom he summons from the Hells. He has no formal pacts with them, but he uses magical compulsion and threat to force them to serve him. This is a dangerous practice and Reydrich knows it; he has ringed himself around with magical protections against the wrath of a powerful greater baatezu, including unique spells and items of his own devising.

Reydrich is growing to love the power he has. He wants to extend it further, but he is highly pragmatic. He knows that the western lands might be easy to conquer—but that would be stupid because it would bring him next to the monstrous Duke of Almor as well





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as leaving his southern flank exposed. Likewise, he has no desire to be crowned in Rauxes. He knows that he would have many bitter rivals and his hold on power would be too tenuous. Rather, the archmage covets Idee and Onnwal, for annexing these lands would eliminate his most dangerous neighbor from their southern land base and also lead to the fall of Irongate. That is his present aim, but he is in no hurry. He is also wise enough not to waste energy being aggressive toward the tricky guerrilla fighters of Sunndi.

Finally, Reydrich has an especial hatred of the Circle of Five and Mordenkainen. Some 15 years ago he pleaded with Mordenkainen to become a member of the Circle of Eight. The rejection did not overly surprise him, but the manner of it did; Mordenkainen let it be known that one who relied so much on compulsion and servitude was no true mage, for such acts are a substitute for true magical prowess and understanding. Reydrich took the insult badly indeed, and if given any way of stymieing the Circle, he would certainly do so.

**Tarrak:** 11th-level mage (Con 16, Int 18, Wis 17). AC 2 (*bracers of defense* AC 5, *ring of protection* +3), hp 44, AL NE. Tarrak's true appearance is as a 30-year-old woman, 5' 6", slim of build, with light brown hair worn in a long pony tail and green-hazel eyes. One-time apprentice and concubine to Reydrich, she now has her own home at Ker

Bazainn where she experiments with her ever-repeating *book of infinite spells* to her heart's content.

Tarrak has a strange disability; she cannot cast spells when Luna is within two days of being full in the sky, due to a powerful *geas*/curse laid upon her by a Sunndi elven wizard. As a result, she hates elves with an especial passion and is trying to develop spells which are more powerful than ones of equivalent level, but have more limited applicability. She has developed a fireball which inflicts 1d6+1 points of damage per level, but all targets other than elves suffer half damage and save for no damage at all from the spell effect. She also hires bounty hunters to track down the wizard who cursed her, hoping that if he is slain the curse will be lifted.

A deceitful mage, she will do anything to advance her own power and magical arsenal. She owns *wands of fire* and *frost* and a *staff of stinking clouds* of unique design. She is loyal to Reydrich for the only reason she will ever be loyal to anyone; he has the power to snuff her out like a candle if she betrays him. Tarrak also has a unique way of settling old scores; she has enemies killed or kidnapped (so that she can torture them), and then uses a specialized version of the animate dead spell which traps the spirit in an undead form forced to comply with her commands. Unfortunately, they are still sentient and sensitive to pain. This allows her to continue tormenting and torturing her enemies endlessly.

Pop.: 420,000 + 8,000 humanoids (approx)  
Capital: Rel Deven (pop. 8,000)  
Rulers: Various  
Rulership: Variable  
Cost Multiplier: 160%

## A House Fallen

The Western Lands comprise two swathes separated by the Harp River and its southern tributary. South of this river lies the lands claimed by Prince Carwend of Rel Deven, and the Cranden Conclave of some 20 lesser nobles of this house, with these fiefs occupying about three-fourths of the total. North of the rivers, bounded by the main Harp waterway to the west and the Adri Forest to the east, is a broad area of land which is far less organized and which faces threats from Almor and the chaotic lands around Innspa.

This northern territory is the province of many minor Princes without any true leaders or men of distinction.

Together, these lands are of greatest note because what is left of House Cranden is almost entirely concentrated here. House Darmen and House Naelax also have a few princes and landholdings here, but Carwend is a scion of Cranden, and if there is any unifying faction in these troubled lands, this house is it.

Princes of this house are much more varied than others. House Darmen is known for its many merchants, House Naelax for its insanity and innate evil, but Cranden is not easily summarized by any such label.

When House Cranden fell from the malachite throne, the reaction of its nobles was polarized. The house was oppressed by other houses, not least because they feared revenge for Rax-Nyrond usurping the throne and acted to diminish Cranden's power. Cranden nobles tended to take one of three lines of reaction to this.

One path was to polarize toward true Neutrality, to withdraw from temporal affairs and follow the path of sage or wizard. Cranden always has had a history of exceptional scholars, and this behavior was a signal to other houses that Cranden accepted its fate, seeking authority and prestige in affairs of the intellect, not of the world.

A second path, followed by many of the younger and lesser nobles at the time, was to turn to Chaotic Evil. "If we cannot rule then let there be chaos," was the effective motto of this faction. Because such men were not in a position to strike back and revenge themselves on other houses, those who took this path frequently degenerated into cruel acts, oppressing others as they felt themselves to be oppressed. House Cranden contains some of the most violently evil people in all of Aerdy.

The third path, very much a minority one, was to follow the ways of Lawful Good. This appealed to more philosophically-minded Cranden princes, perhaps the

best of them in many ways. Accepting their fate, and knowing that all dynasties come to an end, nobles taking this path increasingly turned to the priesthoods of Good and saw themselves as gaining authority and kudos in spiritual matters rather than the intellectual pursuits of their neutrally-inclined brethren.

Apart from this complexity, House Cranden is important because of its history and traditions. Cranden sages have many of the finest collections of historical documents, tomes, and items in all the lands. If one should seek all that is known of such ancient luminaries as Lum the Mad, Johydee, the Wind Dukes of Aqaa, and the Sunken Isles below the Nyr Dyv, then Cranden sages are the best sources—and probably the most accessible. Indeed, the house itself has produced some of the greatest names in all Oerth's history; Johydee, Tuerny the Merciless, Schandor, and among more modern luminaries, both Bigby (which is generally known) and Mordenkainen himself (which is not known to more than a handful). PCs should not learn this fact easily, if at all.

Likewise, the lands of House Cranden still give refuge to a few powerful good-aligned exiles, fled from the evil eastern domains. Priests of Pholtus and Rao still exist here, though they conceal their true identities from any prying eyes for obvious reasons.

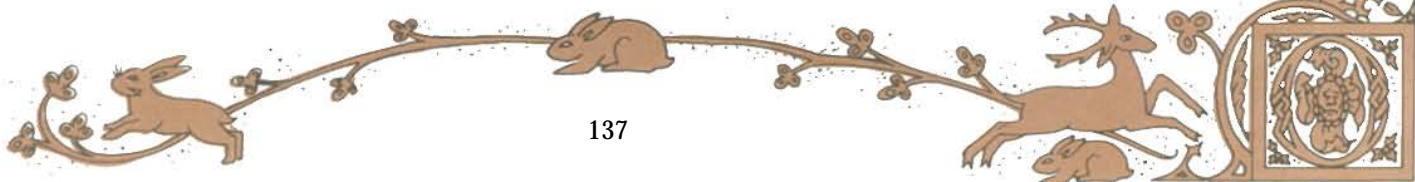
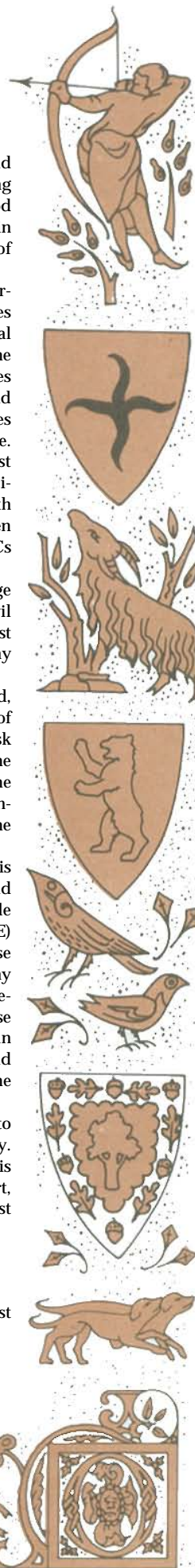
These lands still pay homage and tribute to Ivid, sending supplies and taxes to Rauxes. The position of Carwend and his fellows is too perilous for them to risk the overking's wrath. While Rauxes may be far away, the westernmost Naelax lands border on these fiefdoms. The dreaded forces of Permanence are too close to the easternmost Cranden nobles for them to dismiss out of hand the overking's declining strength.

Carwend does his best to unify these lands, but this is difficult. Darmen princes tend to look to Xavener and other powerful Darmen nobles for leadership, while many Cranden nobles of extreme alignments (LG, CE) look upon Carwend with real dislike. However, house loyalty overrides even alignment differences in many cases (though LG and CE individuals will not countenance cooperating with each other). Something of House Cranden's old sense of glorious destiny remains even in the most degenerate wrecks of its lineage. The glories and great names of a faded past still mean something to the nobles of this house.

Carwend has no ambitions to restore House Cranden to the throne, accepting the change in his house's destiny. Nor is he willing to ally with any who have this ambition. He cannot possibly give any military support, since all the forces he has must be kept to watch against the threat from Almor.

## The Lay of the Land

The situation is desperate. Naelax lands lie to the east





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and their rulers cannot be given offense. To the southwest, Ahlissa is the one possible ally the western lands have—Reydrich actually sends some weapons and funds to Carwend and this support is sorely needed. Carwend knows full well that Reydrich is no true friend, but is protecting himself against Almor by shoring up the western lands. But the supplies are as valuable as if a true friend had given them, and at least Carwend fears no threat from this quarter.

North, keeping the chaotic overspill from the lands around Innspa in check is a permanent drain on the resources of the local nobles, so Carwend sends most Ahlissan aid there. Raided by wandering orcs and bandits from those lands, the nobles also look west to the threat of Almor, and east to the Adri Forest—the woodsmen have not raided into the farmlands much yet, but if they increase their efforts, the strain may become intolerable.

The great threat lies westward, of course. Szeffrin's fiendish and humanoid armies swarm over the ruins of Chathold and across most of old Almor. While no army has marched into the western lands yet, a strong one could crush the weak Cranden and Darmen armies if they did. Szeffrin could claim some legitimacy for striking against the lands north of the Harp tributary, since these were part of the old greater Almor which he claims as his domain. More to the point, there would be none to stop him; might is right here.

However, the animus-duke is still biding his time, and he has no especial interest in anything much other than the destruction of the overking.

These lands are also far poorer than they once were. The early-season Windmarch fairs used to come from Chathold and farther west to Rel Deven, Ralsand, and other towns during Planting and Flocktime. The Greyhawk Wars, and especially the destruction of Chathold, have ruined almost all of that. A few travelers still come; but they usually come to seek whispers and rumors in quiet places, not to bring money or goods for barter and sale. Much trade now is purely local, save for that which comes from Ahlissa and the Darmen lands, though fortunately these are both increasing. Carwend and his house hope to hold on long enough for the western lands to rebuild.

## Locations and Settlements

### Rel Deven

Rel Deven is the only really sizeable city in these lands and is of especial importance.

Prince Carwend, the Cranden ruler, is the head of a complex government. He and four brothers and cousins share the income from taxes in the city equally, but each has a particular sphere of primary responsibility (city

treasury, military, guild rulership and administration) and none is, technically, a complete ruler.

However, Carwend is the acknowledged head of the government, by virtue of his political skills and farsightedness.

Rel Deven is unique among Aerdy cities in that only temples of neutrally-aligned deities (LN, N, CN) are officially allowed to exist. Those of Boccob, Zilchus, and the garden-shrines of Beory are the most important. Carwend's ancestors were firmly rooted, as he is, in the pure Neutral branch of the House of Cranden. However, there are unofficial temples of many deities with a neutral element in alignment (NG, NE) to be found in the city. Some are fairly openly, such as the temple to Pelor. However, some are less so, such as the temple to Nerull.

Rel Deven also contains the bizarre *glowstones*, said to have been enchanted by Schandor himself. There are a dozen of these, eight around the city walls, two above the city hall, and two others which move around the city and appear at unpredictable places and times.

Each stone is a solid ball some 2' in diameter, capable of levitation and flight (MV 40). Each is apparently impervious to any form of magical or normal damage, and each can vanish into another plane if attacked in any way. They return at an unpredictable time. Each stone, bar the two wanderers, hovers in its usual place, emitting a pale blue glow which is visible even in full sunlight. The glow of the stones grows to a brilliant intensity when some threat endangers the city (e.g., an approaching army). The stones around the walls are said to deflect missile and siege weapon fire and to greatly diminish the potency of magical attacks. Old longbowmen, who remember the attempted sack of the city by Ahlissan forces in 531 CY tell that when they fired their arrows the shafts gleamed with blue brilliance and bent in flight, striking their targets almost unerringly.

Further, the equally bizarre Cult of the Stones has gained some adherents in Rel Deven in recent years. A small group of townsfolk claim to have heard one of the wandering stones speak, warning of the wars and giving visions of mayhem. At the time, this was laughed at, but when war broke out, no few people took to revering the stones as protectors and standing around them—screaming prophecies of doom to all who would listen.

Since the end of the world has not actually transpired, the cult has lost some standing. However, a core of fanatics remains, and they can be dangerous—curious visitors getting too close to the stones might be set upon by angry cultists convinced that the strangers mean their sacred stones harm.

Cults like this are a strong strand in the psychology of the city. The absolute Neutrality of the rulers doesn't provide any clear moral direction for less sophisticated commonfolk, so many take to strange superstitions or extreme, exaggerated interpretations of established faiths.

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The coin-worshippers outside Zilchus's temple are a good example of the latter.

Rel Deven also has an extremely varied population. An enclave of some 100 voadkyn, exiles from the Bonewood, has taken up residence in Beory's Gardens and is now part of the city's army. Their goal is to reclaim the Bonewood/Thelwood and deal with the evil therein. Likewise, 600 Thelwood soldiers are garrisoned here, their brown and green jerkins and ashwood bows demarcating them from the other soldiers.

Even a few wood elves are to be found in Carwen's city, from a tiny Thelwood clan which has brought its famous silver-streaked elven cats with them. Rel Deven is a crowded, diverse, and surprising place. Tucked away in towers and spires, or hidden in crypts below Rel Deven, are priests of Rao, Incabulos and even Joramy. There are sages with almost unequalled proficiency in arcane fields who receive disguised and silent visitors on dark evenings. And there are blue-robed stonemages, who study and research the *glowstones*.

## The Bonewood

Once known as the Thelwood, this has never been a populous forest. However, its woodsmen have made superb infantry and bowmen, playing a leading role in taking the lands south of the Grayflood in times gone by and demonstrating excellent morale and pride. Now, perhaps only 1,000 of the 5,000 or so original pre-war foresters are left, living only on the very margins of the wood.

Shortly before the outbreak of war, a horrifying change came over the woods. Trees almost ossified overnight, their barks becoming bleached and hard as stone. In moonlight, they looked like ghastly bony sentinels, hence the name of the wood these days. The few treants of the Thelwood vanished; trees were transformed in an ever-wider area from the heart of the forest. Game became scarcer and undergrowth shrivelled. Any who tried to stay alive in this place found themselves succumbing to disease or madness, haunted by phantoms and nightmares.

Now some 80% of the Bonewood is a barren, lifeless shell, with only the yellowy-white "bone" trees remaining. The cause of this change is wholly unknown, but it is striking that the few druids of Obad-hai once here have fled—surely a sign that some truly dire evil is at work now. Likewise, the wood elves and voadkyn have departed, taking refuge in Rel Deven, pondering on what they can do to return the Thelwood to its former state.

## Blacksplinter

These badlands are home to the most treacherous and dangerous of all the nobles of the land, Prince Ferrenan,

bastard son of a Cranden/Rax-Nyrrond union which gave him a necromancer for a father and a priestess of Incabulos for a mother. Ferrenan's own home is a grisly necropolis, a mausoleum-keep with the bodies of a hundred and more ancestors entombed in marble—to keep them firmly in their graves, many would say.

The very terrain around this place is extraordinary enough. Patches of bog and swamp threaten the traveler with a swift drowning death, since many are disguised by *hallucinatory terrain*, and there is a vast sprawling network of potholes which descend into gleaming black caverns infested by monsters. Passages to the Underdark are to be found there, and there are constant rumors that Ferrenan receives drow as guests to his undead-thronged halls.

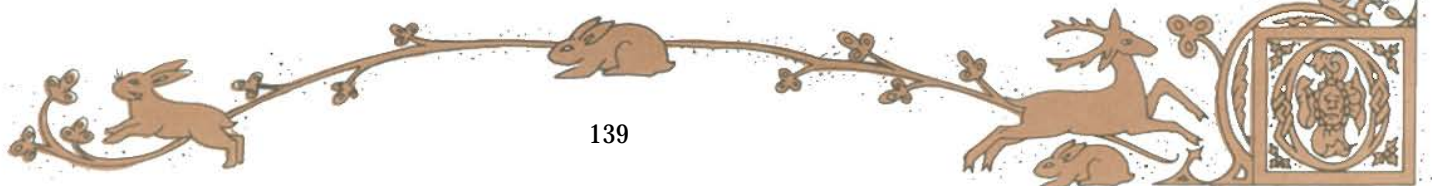
Yet, Ferrenan cannot be ignored or forgotten. Ghosts and spectres compelled to serve him bring him reports of events in Almor. The vampire-necromancer-prince of Blacksplinter appears very anxious to make sure Szeffrin's armies never break through beyond the Harp River (further details are given in his entry in the Personalities section below). Thus, Ferrenan is an ally of Carwend, albeit a repulsive one, and the prince of Rel Deven does not turn away allies in this time of great need.

Ferrenan also owns a library of works by Cranden mages, including some unique spells for banishing and greatly weakening extra-planar beings. Carwend and many others are desperate to obtain these works. Ferrenan does not permit visitors to enter his lands. He has the grounds patrolled by zombies with ghastriders said to be of great size and exceptional cunning.

## Goldbolt

This magnificent six-towered, twin-courtyard castle is a citadel of good. The lands around are ruled by Karn Serrand, a paladin serving Rao. The castle occupants keep watch over the fiends, monsters, and mad things prowling the borders of Chathold. Serrand is proud of his lineage which he claims goes back to Queen Yalranda herself, and of its unswerving allegiance to the ethos of Lawful Good throughout the centuries. Serrand and Carwend dislike each other, the animosity being greater on the paladin's part. Still, Carwend knows the vital importance of this citadel in keeping the deranged evils of Chathold at bay, and he keeps the place amply provisioned and supplied. This is as well, for there are few farmers left in Serrand's lands to feed the men there now.

Serrand's army contains only men of trustworthy (LG, NG, LN) alignments, and several priests of Rao and Pelor have taken refuge with him. The most powerful single defender of the castle, however, is the storm giantess Hierranea. Far away from her normal abode, the giant arrived here shortly after the fall of Chathold and





# The Western Lands

announced herself to Serrand.

Well aware that storm giants are chaotic, Serrand was about to politely dismiss her when the clouds overhead grew instantaneously as dark as the fate of Chathold. The giantess reached up to touch one of the castle towers with her left hand, and in her right drew down from the clouds a golden lightning bolt which traveled, it is said, as far as the horizon and exploded above Chathold with a deafening thunderclap. Stunned, the paladin meditated on what to do and received a vision from Rao, instructing him to take the giantess into his citadel. Serrand also later discovered, in the castle library, an ancient tome speaking of the ability of certain priests to generate the power of this golden lightning from the site where the castle was built, and Serrand renamed the castle Goldbolt in honor of this prophecy and his strange visitor.

Building a tower for Hierranea has been in progress for more than a year. The giantess is a priestess of Stronmaus, the giantish power of sun, storms, and skies, and she is good-humored and liked—though half-feared on account of her enormous size by the defenders of the castle.

Hierranea has prophesied that the lands west of the castle, around Chathold, will crumble and vanish into the sea within a few years, and Goldbolt will be left as a sea castle. She has a reputation as a prophetess which almost equals her reputation as a priestess. Hierranea is known through virtually all the western lands, and evil things and spies from adjoining lands fear to approach this great castle on account of her.

## Jennden

Jennden is the only truly significant settlement of the lands north of the Harp tributary, and it is home to 6,000 people. It is an overcrowded city, filled to the bursting-point with refugees from old Almor and riddled with poverty and disease. The city's despot, Prince Jichrisen, has not been seen for almost a year now, and the city seems to be ruled by a military triumvirate, with both human and orcish troops administering a savage order. This faceless junta is a force Carwend must deal with, for maintaining the forces here is crucial to keeping the threats of Almor at bay.

Jennden is a city where virtually none of good alignments live. Visitors are targets for robbery, assault, and murder. Because of this, few head south from Innspa along the once well-traveled highway linking the cities. Indeed, while the evil mercenaries, thieves, and murderers of the city are well-known, its worst evil is not. Jichrisen was abducted to Rauxes during the Greyhawk Wars, and Ivid's priests worked their magic on him, with wholly unpredictable and spectacular results.

Jichrisen's family has always had a streak of lycanthropy in their blood, partly due to a Rax-Nyrond streak. Now, the werewolf lycanthrope-animus has become a

snarling, marauding thing which is kept chained and magically restrained in the dungeons of his own castle while his brother, Horamy, heads the junta ruling the city. Unfortunately, the strength of the monster is increasing, and the magical bonds which restrain him grow fragile. If Jichrisen were loosened upon the lands, the fate of the people of this city—and far beyond—hardly bears thinking about.

Jennden anchors a string of a dozen or so small keeps along the east bank of the Harp, keeping watch over Almor. Each keep has 50 to 100 infantrymen, with the luckier ones having a mage or two to support them. They would not realistically provide much defense against invasion from Almor, but the very fact that they are maintained and troops drilled outside them hopefully sends some kind of signal to Szeffrin about the readiness of these lands to defend themselves.

The southern keeps, in particular, tend to lie in the fiefdoms of good-aligned Cranden princes and Darmen nobles. Their troops have correspondingly better morale and equipment. Some are supported by light cavalry units which patrol the river banks—ever watchful for fiends and humanoids.

## Oldridge

Oldridge is set amid an array of warring petty princes; Darmen, Cranden (the CE line predominating), Naelax to the east, and even a couple of the last remnant of the Rax-Nyrond bloodlike, albeit rather diluted. Thus, the town is a nest of mercenaries and recruiters and disgruntled troops returning unpaid from the service of one or other prince whose name is now only part of history.

What sets Oldridge apart from this petty warmongering is that the town is the birthplace of Bigby. Indeed, he left his now deserted tower outside the town only some 12 years ago. And there are many rumors about what he might have left behind, for black-robed visitors flanked by fiends arrived in hot pursuit of him only days later. The tower has been looted, of course, and some of its dungeons explored, but there are tales of other, interdicted, dungeons which can only be accessed at times of rare lunar and planetary conjunctions and which may yet be unspoiled. Since Bigby has not returned, however, there is likely nothing of a really powerful nature remaining.

## Ralsand

This town of 2,800 is a vital reserve garrison. Its blue-liveried light cavalry is famed for speed and horsemanship.

The town is ruled by a distant cousin of Carwend's, and his men travel to any trouble spots, generally west, to support any troops or settlements under threat. The specialist diviner Francenn is a colorful figure in the

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place, said he to have a map of the western lands and Almor in his tower. The construction glows in areas where threats arise, so that he has magical warning of enemy approaches.

Francenn is a worshiper of Olidammara, a very strange choice for a mage. He is a high-living, gregarious sort. He has two dwarven bodyguards who carry him home from his evening indulgences, and anyone trying to loot the mage's home or attack him should beware: the two are actually polymorphed and charmed mountain giants and have the same strength (23) they possessed in their previous forms.

## Rasfern

Rasfern is the picturesque home of Prince Benzeden, an archmage-noble known to revere Boccob. It is an oddly tranquil place, named after the purple-leaved ferns which spring up around the many small lakelets and pools of the village that are fed by underground springs.

In Flocktime, when the spring waters grow unusually warm for a short time, the pink flowers and the scent of the ferns is almost overpowering. Those waters are dangerous; while the two largest lakelets have a few nixies, water weirds may be found in smaller pools. The villagers keep well away.

There may indeed be more in the waters, for the villagers seem an almost passionless bunch, never angry, irritable—and never joyful or delighted either. They are polite, mildly helpful, and they are lacking in any personality whatever. Woe betide anyone harming them, for Benzeden will certainly pursue any who do, and his vengeance will be both swift and devastating. Benzeden favors invisible stalkers, air elementals, and aerial servants as his messengers. And those he calls upon are tougher than most (his conjured elementals are always 20+ HD).

Benzeden is a recluse and does not visit, nor receive visits from, his peers. Carwend sent a messenger asking for assistance, expecting a small sum in tithes to maintain patrols and forces around the area. Benzeden sent him two iron golems with an attached note politely expressing support for Carwend and a desire to be left alone in future. The priceless guardians are among the best defenders Rel Deven has, so Carwend was delighted—but he does not want to risk asking the archmage for any further help.

Benzeden is a force none understand or can predict. What he does in his spired tower complex is shielded from even the most expert of prying eyes by powerful blocks to magical scrying and unsleeping magical guardians.

## Tarrentch

This fortified manor house, and the village of 400 or so around it, appear just like any other small riverside settle-

ment but for one thing: the richness of the place. Everyone here has money, or seems to have, but they are careful not to let strangers see this too easily. Prices are high here (Cost multiplier 200%, and 150% even for food and staples), and even farm laborers have some silver coins in their pockets. The reason is that an awful lot of money turns up in Tarrentch, having been "liberated" from one or other town or city by the mansion owner, the thief Goldwhite.

Goldwhite is an audacious, impish woman. Long a thorn in the flesh of the merchants of Rel Deven, Jennden, and far beyond, she has even been known to tip off her future victims and then bypass all the security they muster. If her heart is set on having something, it seems that nothing will stop her. Bubbly and intensely charismatic, she enjoys flaunting her wealth in the midst of those she has taken it from.

However, the mischievous thief knows that dangers of an entirely different kind menace Tarrentch now. She knows that the threat of Szeffrin is an altogether different thing compared to cavalry or fiend-knights of the overking—forces she has eluded.

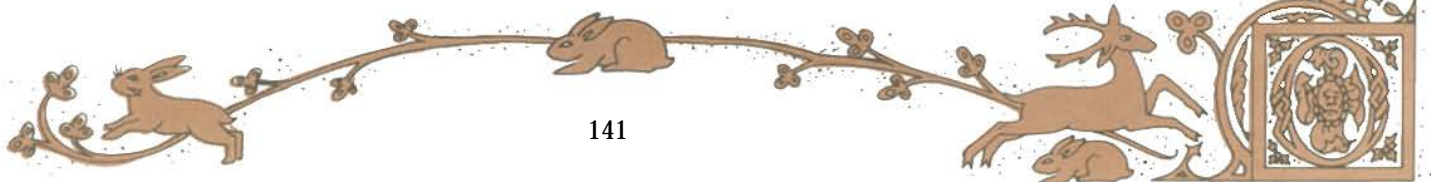
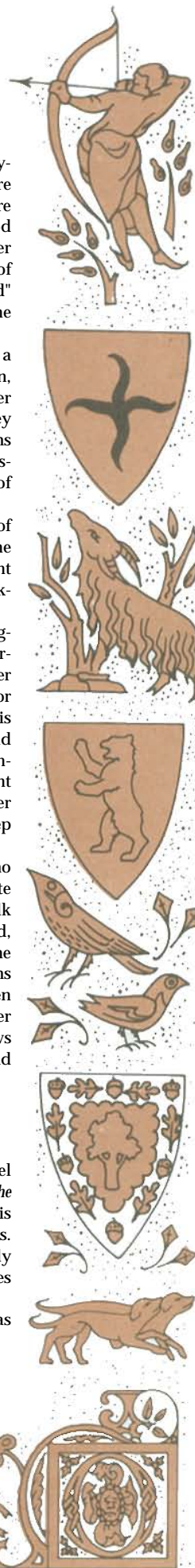
Increasingly, Goldwhite is away from her home, bringing gold back from far-distant cities to pay for mercenaries and adventurers both to support Carwend's border keeps and garrisons and to investigate events in Almor for her. Perhaps, also, the rebelliousness of youth is beginning to fade a little, although Goldwhite would certainly take umbrage at any who accused her of responsibility with the advancing years. Goldwhite doesn't want to lose her home now, whereas once she would never even have thought of having a home, preferring to keep on the move.

Goldwhite is known to loathe Karasin of Innspa, who has a bounty of 10,000 gp on the thief's head—Goldwhite had stole her jewelry and left her trussed up in her silk undergarments in a highly undignified position. Indeed, a fair number of Aerdy nobles have a bounty on the thief's head, but she's escaped from jails and dungeons before and she has no fear of them. Goldwhite has stolen valuables from a huge number of places she should never have been able to enter, and correspondingly she knows scraps of information about places which even sages and diviners might not know.

## Personalities of the Western Lands

**Carwend, Prince of the House of Cranden:** 13th-level mage (Con 14, Int 18, Cha 15). AC 0 (gray robes of the archmagi, ring of protection +5), hp 52, AL N. Carwend is 50 years old, tall (6' 5") and slim, elegant and fastidious. Clean-shaven, the mage's black hair is only slightly graying at the temples, and there are still only thin lines at the side of his brown eyes.

Carwend is not a particularly skilled mage. He has





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spent too much time immersed in city government, researching the history and genealogy of his family, and in negotiating with others to have given very much time to wizardry in recent years. Thus he is more worldly than most mages, and he has an acute insight into people and personalities.

Carwend is a complex person. His complete Neutrality convinces him that all the factions of House Cranden must coexist for the western lands to survive, just as this is true of all of Aerdy. He dislikes the paladin of Goldbolt (LG) as much as he dislikes the prince of Blacksplinter (CE). All the extreme (non-neutral) alignments are equally irksome to him. He can hold in his heart at the same time the propositions that everything passes and all comes to dust in the great cycle of things, and also an unwavering faith in House Cranden being ripe for a return to glory or rulership. He is both detached and involved at the same time. Likewise, he believes that his house's destiny is fixed. And he realizes Szeffrin and his fiends are a unique and potentially wholly destructive threat to that destiny and that his efforts to neutralize that threat are of ultimate import.

As a personality, Carwend is cool, polite, and impeccably mannered. He has no passion for people, only things and themes. But he listens well, and he wouldn't know how to be condescending if he tried. While he does not suffer fools, he will let a fool speak his piece without interruption—simply ensuring that he does not have to listen to him again. His genuineness, politeness, and brilliance have made him a respected, if not loved, ruler of Rel Deven. It is a good final comment on Carwend that whether people love him is a matter of complete indifference to him. But he would be annoyed if he felt that others lacked respect.

Carwend owns few magical items, his *ring of free action* and *rod of alertness* being the most prized. However, from the resources of Rel Deven's armory he can lay his hands on others, as the DM sees fit.

**Ferrenan, Prince of the House of Cranden:** 15th-level specialist necromancer-vampire (Str 18/76, Int 18, Cha 17). AC -4 (*cloak of displacement*, *ring of protection* +3), hp 61, AL CE. Ferrenan's appearance is as a man in his mid-30's, black-haired and brown-eyed, with very smooth skin and an elegance of features and manners which are exceptional. Ferrenan is a controlled, rakish vampire. He does not need to take blood often, and in the unlikely event of his receiving guests, he prefers heavy red wine. Ferrenan has a fine, black sense of humor with a self-deprecating streak. He even jests about his own vampirism. He has no adverse reaction to garlic, though he has other standard vampiric weaknesses, and he enjoys chewing cloves of it just to see what people's reactions are.

The appearance should not deceive. Ferrenan is indeed

a monster steeped in blood, torture, and all manner of cruelties. He regards ordinary humanity as nothing more than cattle for him to feed on as he wishes. He respects the power of skilled mages, but he is contemptuous of priests and paladins and fears no one and nothing—except Duke Szeffrin.

Szeffrin is a great-great-grand-nephew of Ferrenan (the vampire is in fact some 200 years of age). Before Ferrenan's vampirism was general knowledge, Szeffrin's parents had him cross-fostered into Ferrenan's care. At that time, Ferrenan had a wife who cared for the child. What transpired during Szeffrin's adoptive years, neither will say. But Szeffrin hates Ferrenan as a result, and Ferrenan fears what the fiend-assisted Almorian duke has in store for him.

Bypassing his magical wards and guardians and his throng of undead, some unknown agent of Szeffrin penetrated Blacksplinter to leave a poisoned knife plunged into Ferrenan's hidden coffin, with the message "This would be too good for you. It will be soon now, and it will be horrible." The missive was in Szeffrin's unmistakable calligraphy—in a script learned from Ferrenan's own tutor of the time.

Thus, Ferrenan is a worried individual. He is fairly confident that his new magical defenses against intrusion (expending even a *wish* from a ring) will protect him, and that Szeffrin will have to send an army to get him. Hence Ferrenan has offered support for Carwend's armies and has refused to admit any visitors he does not actually know.

Ferrenan's black frock-coated butler/manservant, Shadwell, is himself a vampire and, since he has the skills of an 11th-level illusionist. Shadwell is almost as dangerous as his master. He presides over a domestic staff largely composed of ju-ju zombies and has an especially fast-thinking line in droll and macabre wordplay. Blacksplinter is a dangerous place, considering Ferrenan's spell book collection (as designed by the DM), and the many magical items the vampire-prince owns, including a *staff of power* with few charges left.

**Goldwhite:** 20th-level thief (Dex 18, Con 16, Int 18, Wis 17, Cha 18). AC -8/-10 (*bracers of defense* AC 2, *ring of protection* +5, magical boots which combine the functions of *speed* and *striding and springing*), hp 81, AL CN (CG). SA/SD all thief skills at 95%. Goldwhite is 38 years old now. She's touchy about that, and says she is in her "early thirties." Slimly built and 5' 4", she weighs less than 100 lbs.—but she is fiery and a powerful presence for all of that smallness. Her dark blond hair is cut short in a page-boy manner which flatters her moonish face and slightly slanted, almond-shaped hazel eyes. She is very proud of her cheekbones. Flattery is her major weakness.

Goldwhite doesn't discuss her origins or true name; her taken name comes from a gilded marble statue which was

Hierranea has come to Goldbolt from her home far east across the Solnor Ocean because of a vision from Stronmaus. In that vision, she saw the lands west of the castle

**Karn Serrand:** 12th-level paladin of Rao (Str 17, Wis 18, Cha 17). AC -1 (*plate mail* +4, shield not used), hp 81, AL LG. Karn is 33, 6' exactly, with light brown hair which has natural honeyish streaks and light brown eyes with a slight amber tint. Serrand is proud and steadfast; he is not



## The Western Lands



aggressive—a paladin of Rao is rarely that. He is, rather, a protector and an endurer. If what he holds dear is menaced, he will respond with unflinching force. However, he does not actively seek out evil to attack it. He waits for it to come to him. With a citadel as well-defended as Goldbolt, this is a very viable strategy.

Serrand maintains nearly 1,000 troops in and around his castle. Slowly, a few farmers are beginning to return to the lands south of the castle, and some crops will be harvested after all this fall. Serrand's funds are not inexhaustible, although Hierranea brought more value in pearls than her tower will cost the paladin to construct. He is glad of the supplies from Carwend, especially the food. Nearly one-tenth of his garrison's food consumption is accounted for by Hierranea.

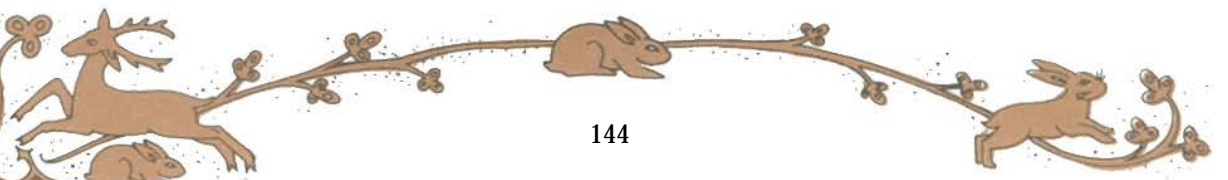
Serrand knows that Rao is pleased that the storm giant-ess has come, and while she causes some consternation among his troops he also sees that their morale has improved. "We will endure with her amongst us," is the general thought. Serrand is only slightly miffed that this reflects less than entirely favorably on himself, but he is tolerant and reasonably worldly-wise—except where Chaotic Evil is concerned. Here, Serrand's usual relative pacifism goes out the window. He detests Ferrenan, and he is furious with Carwend for accepting aid from a

prince he bitterly denounced as "a monster, a sadist, and not even human!"

Carwend politely and coolly replied that he had noticed that Serrand himself had help which was "not even human, as you put it, esteemed prince." That took the wind out of Serrand's sails a little, but he would still dearly love to ride for Blacksplinter and destroy its appalling occupant. He does not do so for fear of leaving the folk of his lands vulnerable to attack from Almor.

Thus, while Serrand is displeased with Carwend and does not understand his complex personality, he also knows that Carwend is doing the best he can to keep the lands together in the face of a great external threat. Perhaps he is so displeased with Carwend precisely because he is doing a fair job. That makes Serrand care for his fellow prince enough to be troubled and disturbed by his failure to understand the philosophy of the prince of Rel Deven.

Serrand has come to believe Hierranea's prophesy—another reason for his not striking aggressively against Chathold. He believes that Szeffrin will have to be fought and destroyed, however, and he is eager to build up the money and resources of his castle and burgeoning small army for the fateful day when the long ride west will be needed.



Pop: 150,000 + 18,000 humanoids + ? fiends  
 Capital: Bloodcrystal?  
 Ruler: Duke Szeffrin  
 Rulership: Special  
 Cost Multiplier: Not relevant

Quite deliberately, many points about some Almorian locations are not specified in this chapter. Duke Szeffrin's evil empire is designed as a grim adventure setting for mid- to high-level PCs, and the DM has been allowed maximum freedom to develop Almor as he wishes. The history of the land and nature and goals of its ruler and his Abyssal ally, have been presented fully, so the DM knows exactly what is going on here. Similarly, the nature of creatures at certain locations, such as types of undead, fiends, and others are specified, though their exact numbers are not. This leaves freedom for the DM to develop details as suits the nature of his individual campaign and the strength of his player characters.

The previous sourcebook, *The Marklands*, detailed a small number of locations included here—Bloodcrystal, Millennium, and Onyxgate. The descriptions of these locations has been expanded here, but the added information does not negate anything from that earlier product. For readers who do not have the earlier sourcebook, there are brief notes on the Nyrondese locations immediately across the western border of the Almorian lands which may be helpful to DMs wishing to set up adventures which commence in Nyrond and involve infiltrating Almor.

## The Day of Dust

The nation of Almor has had a perilous past. Long under the dominion of overkings, it never established the security in independence which such nations as Tenh and Nyrond could claim. Small, underpopulated, with borders subject to dispute by Aerdy and even by Nyrond at times, Almor existed as a buffer state only. An example of the precariousness of Almor is its claim to Innspa. The rulers of this land were unable to prevent Innspa from proclaiming itself an independent city, and that sent signs of the weak-willed nature of Almorian leaders to the rest of the Flanaess. With powerful neighbors, that was simply not the right message to convey.

While the heroism of Ososon of Chathold is celebrated in song and verse, there is little doubt that his exploits cost Almor the lives of tens of thousands of people and plunged it into a nightmare which endures still. Ososon's raids so enraged Ivid that he struck against Almor as brutally and forcefully as he did against Medegia. Ahlissan armies, the Army of the North, and Bone March humanoids converged on Almor and simply overwhelmed its armies. On the 17th day of Goodmonth, 584 CY, mages and priests in Ivid's armies razed

Chathold by fire, lightning, acid, earthquake, poisonous gas, and more. The Day of Dust, as it is now known, saw the nation of Almor disappear from the maps of the Flanaess, probably forever.

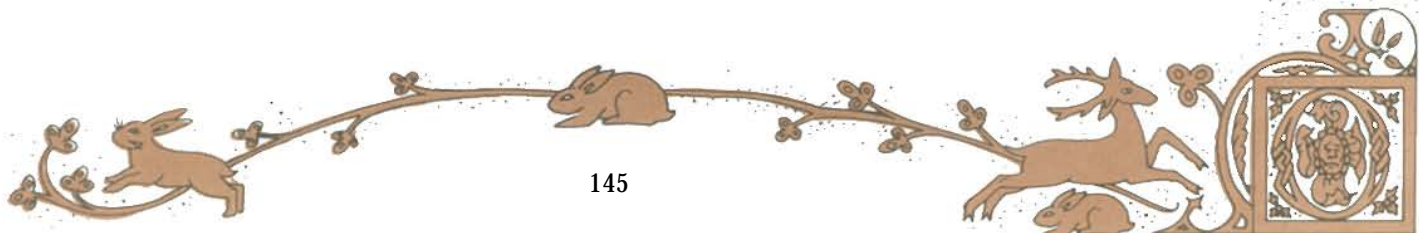
The armies marched on to the very frontier of Nyrond, taking some land which belonged to that nation, until they were ground to a halt at the Battle of Blazebane three weeks later. The forces of Aerdy suffered more than 4,000 casualties besieging that Nyrondese citadel. And while the Ahlissan army departed relatively unscathed, the imperial and humanoid armies suffered grievous losses and found themselves almost bereft of senior commanders.

The one exception was General Szeffrin. Shortly before his leaving Rauxes for the Almorian campaign, Ivid had him transformed into an animus, following his usual practice with senior military leaders about to enforce his imperial will far away from Rauxes. And, on the very night before the march began, Szeffrin was woken by a shadowy and unknown figure who pressed into his hand a simple gold medallion, saying simply, "When the time comes to pay back the overking, call the name upon this gold." The figure had the stench of undeath about it; Xaene the lich cannot disguise that. For some reason he could not rationalize, Szeffrin kept the medallion.

During the coming weeks, the hatreds which gnawed at animuses began to take firm root in Szeffrin's soul—or, to be more precise, what remained of his soul. Loathing his condition, he came to hate Ivid for what had been done to him. Szeffrin worked out his hatreds in the furious, brutal razes of Almor, but when Chathold was incinerated and the severed head of its prelate impaled on the collapsed ruins of the city gates, the black rages in his heart found no obvious expression. The animus wondered how to destroy himself. In a desperate gesture, he gripped the medallion tightly and whispered the name—Pazrael.

Even to a creature as powerful as the animus-general, the sudden appearance of an Abyssal lord was terrifying. Fortunately, the tanar'ri was predisposed to listen and negotiate, to use his wiles and low cunning. Feigning sympathy for Szeffrin's plight, Pazrael offered assistance in making Almor Szeffrin's fief, and to aid him to march on Rauxes and destroy Ivid personally. As to what Pazrael wanted in return, well, that is a subtler and more complex matter the significance of which stretches far across the Flanaess.

Pazrael has an alliance with Iuz, but he also has a long-term goal of replacing Iuz as a ruler over the enormous empire the demipower now rules. Though he is not powerful on the Abyss, lacking allies, Pazrael's domains are populous and he can strengthen Szeffrin considerably. Pazrael's aim in aiding Szeffrin is to establish a first power bloc taking in much of Aerdy with its resources, which will provide human and humanoid armies with which to supplement the fiends the lord could throw into





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the fray.

Pazrael's fiends can also gain experience of the Prime Material by marauding into Nyrond. And his favored nabassu can grow mature and powerful by slaying in the Prime Material—all the better to fight the Blood Wars and internecine struggles in the Abyss. Pazrael is also experimenting with magic in the Prime Material; the Abyssal lord has gained possession of an abyssal magical relic, enhancing his gating and that of his minions, which also has important creating abilities (hence the raising of Bloodcrystal so rapidly). Pazrael has much to learn, and he needs to test his strength. Szeffrin's realm is an ideal place to do this.

## The Lay of the Land

Szeffrin may have pronounced himself Duke from his base in Bloodcrystal and laid claim to all the old lands of Almor, but that does not mean he controls those lands, nor all those lands west of the Harp and around Chathold where there are none in occupation to refuse him rulership.

Many of the Almorian Lands are wholly disorganized, with marauding remnants of armies comprised of imperials, fighters from North Province and Ahlissan deserters. Added to this are the Bone March and Adri humanoids far from their homes. There are even some fortified farmsteads where Almorian families, despite all the threats which surround them, still manage to survive. The large majority of Almor's population, however, are forced into slavery by Szeffrin or used as forced levies by armies seeking to raid Nyrond, the Adri, into the western lands, or even as far as the Flinty Hills and north into the Theocracy of the Pale.

Already, more than 50,000 Almorians have perished, and many more die by the day.

A fair number of the fiends in Almor are not commanded by Szeffrin. They may be sent by Pazrael, but being chaotic they certainly roam and maraud as they wish much of the time. This is acceptable to Szeffrin. He does not care much what the fiends do, so long as they are available to him when he is ready to march on Rauxes. Then, Pazrael will have to marshal his fractious servants on behalf of the animus-duke.

Despite all this, the dominant ethos in Almor has been the common good for a long time, and there are still some surviving pockets or even strongholds of the good and strong, surviving beleaguered in these dreadful days. The courage of such men and women was badly shaken by the destruction of the mighty paladin Shreckend in the citadel of Appolled in the month of Flocktime. But these folk will sell their lives dearly to Szeffrin's merciless evil.

Almor presents the greatest tragedy in all the Flanaess in some ways. This was a beautiful country, with gently rolling fields and meadows, the patchwork of small

landholdings separated by flowering hedgerows a delight in spring. The weary traveler could always find somewhere to rest his weary feet along the roads, whether that be a tavern or the barn of a friendly farming family. Almorians were, for the most, kindly and trusting people. The virtues of Good were expressed gently and quietly here, not in great deeds of derring-do which bards would sing of, but in the simple kindnesses of consideration and fellowship.

Now, the fields are unsewn, and half the farms of the land have been put to the torch. For warriors to die in battle is one thing; for a simple farming family to be left, ripped to pieces, in a ditch by some gloating fiend is an evil which is all the more dreadful for its senselessness. The famed mage Nystul, of the Circle of Five, was caught up in the exodus from Almor when Szeffrin was cementing his hold on the land. This normally humorous and flippant man was almost speechless when he fled to Mordenkainen and Bigby, and he shook with rage recounting what he had seen here. He has vowed to destroy Szeffrin, and, while the Circle's current ethos is strongly against direct action and for careful watching and learning, it may be hard even for Mordenkainen and the ever-cautious Bigby to prevent him from trying.

To the east of Szeffrin's domain the armies of Nyrond are amassed along the Sword Road (they are documented in *The Marklands*). Nyrond is too weak to attack Almor, and Szeffrin knows it. His concerns lie east, toward Rauxes, and the overking is the only target he seeks. Szeffrin has become a truly ghastly animus, his self-hatred expressing itself in an unmitigated rage at every sign of life and weal around him. Just as he longs for an end to his own hellish existence, the animus-duke seeks to bring death and destruction to all the lands he can subjugate and conquer with his burgeoning fiendish allies. Szeffrin is supremely dangerous not because he has strong armies (though he has), but for psychological reasons. He doesn't fear death, he embraces it and longs for it, and in doing so he has become its very embodiment. When his armies march forth, as they surely will, untold thousands will perish.

## Locations and Settlements

### Appolled

This shattered ruin was once the castle of the paladin Shreckend and his followers and retainers. It only fell in Flocktime of the current year, after months of siege by an orcish army—the remnants of which still roam the area. Fiends and mages finally destroyed the place, slaying everyone they could find and looting the treasures of the fine chapels of Pelor and Heironeous within the place.

Below the rubble, however, the dungeons of Appolled were not fully explored by the teeming orcs. Here a group

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of 30 low-level fighters and men-at-arms still survives, aided by a magical cornucopia which can *create food and water* three times a day. They have but one spellcaster with them, a 6th-level mage, and they are too afraid to try their luck even emerging to the surface to check what is happening. Many of them could give excellent first-hand accounts of the flying chariots used by fiendish assailants (see details for Bloodcrystal below), and the group also managed to hide the spellbooks of the castle's premier mage, Arastenn. Thus, any group rescuing them would gain both magic and information, and the area is not routinely patrolled by fiends, mages or priests.

## The Badlands

Certain areas on the color map are shown as badlands. These are burned and razed villages or small towns, or the sites of battles or massacres. At the latter sites, many Almorians perished at the hands of genocidal evil forces, usually fiends, mages, and priests of Hextor. Each of these locations is 10 to 100 square miles in size (10d10), with the area being centered upon any old settlement therein.

The badlands are ghastly and appallingly dangerous. Diseased corpses infest the areas, and tormented undead of mindless savagery (Morale 20 in all cases, turn as two categories higher than usual) plague them. Floating clouds of *stinking cloud*/*cloudkill* effect may be found here, as well as ghosts and ghouls, seeking new victims to feast upon. The DM is at liberty to expand these areas and add perils and menaces. Examples might include: energy draining clouds of mist, choking black corrosive acid clouds which paralyze humans (but not demihumans), disease-carrying warped vegetation, fiends disguised as undead, zombies which explode in 20' radius acid storms when destroyed with any edged weapon, ground which spontaneously decays under the footfalls of a living creature, fissures and areas of utterly treacherous acid-soaked bogs, and more. Naturally, these areas are best used as ones into which PCs must travel to retrieve some needed item or piece of information.

## Bloodcrystal

Bloodcrystal is a four-towered castle of great size with red crystalline fragmented cupolas atop each tower. The total of the teeming armies here is unknown, but they are awesomely powerful.

First, Szeffrin has not only humanoids of the usual type—orcs and goblins—but more than 100 ogres and phalanxes of both hill giants and trolls. How he keeps control over these usually quarrelsome races is unknown, but discipline appears to be maintained. There are even ettins, used as guardhouse watchouts.

Second, Szeffrin has renegade priests of Hextor in his citadel. Some are rare humanoid shamans of this power,

others are turncoat humans from North Province and even the central Aerdy lands. Why they have chosen to serve Szeffrin is uncertain, though as priests of war they must know that the opportunity for glory cannot be far away.

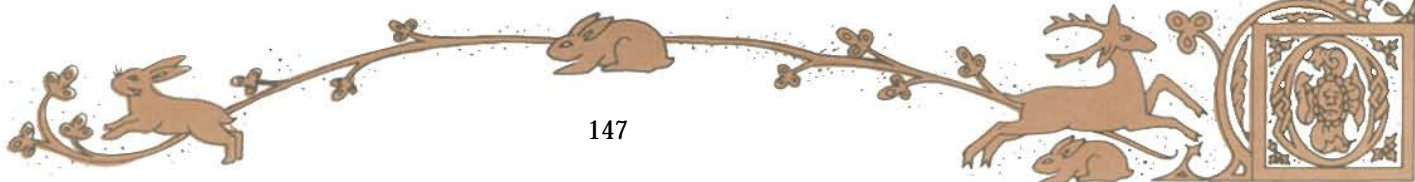
Third, Szeffrin has fiends of Pazrael here. There are perhaps 30 nabassu at any given time, and perhaps ten times this number of least and lesser tanar'ri. More worrying still, a few gehreleth and yugoloths have been sighted at the castle by brave Nyrondeese spies, and even a marilith or two has been spotted. And, while there are enough fiends here, Nyrondeese mages have warned their king that Szeffrin may be able to call upon thousands of them should he so need this.

Finally, Szeffrin has well more than 2,000 undead creatures here. Zombies and skeletons have been created from the bodies of Almorians slain by fiends, but there are also several hundred much more dangerous undead, notably ju-ju zombies and ghosts.

To complicate matters, Bloodcrystal is a potentially magical place. The entire structure is said to have sprung up, on the site of a great Nyronde-Aerdy battle, within a week. The great iron gates of the castle have been seen to spit smoking, corrosive acid upon command from one of the red-robed mages serving Szeffrin. And a red-streaked black "rainbow" has also been seen above the place, depositing bloody hailstones the size of goose eggs.

What other intrinsic magic the castle has is unknown, though it radiates magic (alteration, abjuration, conjuration/summoning and evocation) very strongly. It is also magically protected against assault by fire, lightning, and *transmute rock to mud* and the like. Ghiselinn, premier mage of Nyronde, has grimly assured his king that even an earthquake would leave the place still standing. The Nyrondeese are also said to be keenly troubled by sightings of a pair of gray-robed albino Suloise mages, apparently identical twins. Admittedly, in these days almost any very fair-skinned Suel person is suspected of being an agent of the Scarlet Brotherhood, but these mages are powerful. One cast a *meteor swarm* at fleeing Nyrondeese.

And all this may yet be the tip of the iceberg. Flying above the Sword Road recently, seemingly impervious to missile fire, came two great fiery stone chariots, flying aloft with teams of fiends spraying acid and *cloudkills* onto the terrified Nyrondeese below. Archbold's mages have identified these as a transformed version of the *chariot of Sustarre* spell, and the gloating aviators were traced back to Bloodcrystal. Again, whatever magical artifact Pazrael is using in conjunction with Szeffrin, it must be greatly powerful to create such effects. Magical scrying has not revealed what this artifact may be, nor what powers Szeffrin and his ally may yet unleash from it.





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## The Ruins of Chathold

The horrors of this place are as dire as any found in all of Medegia, with its deranged and maddened souls. Chathold suffered such a rain of fire, acid, and lightning as has not been seen since the Invoked Devastation itself. Mists, fogs, poisonous gases, and palls of smoke still loom in and over the burned-out ruins of the city, and soul-rending howls can be heard by day or night.

All manner of evils have been drawn to this nightmare place. Fiends and orcs prowl and roam, but they have almost passed beyond Szeffrin's reach or even that of Pazrael (in the case of fiends). Acolytes of Nerull have been drawn here, breathing in the redolent stench of death and massacre like a delicate perfume. Bony, black-robed priests of Incabulos pick over the ruins, their grim master smiling on the putrescine undead they have animated from the thousands of corpses to be found here. These creatures prowl the city ruins, and they maraud as far south as the line held by the citadel at Goldbolt. The orcs, other humanoids, and wretched bandits of Aerdy who live in those southeastern lands seem afflicted by the evil emanating from Chathold itself. They appear almost deranged, driven on by some inner madness, reckless and careless of death.

Indeed, Chathold has taken on a magical aura all of its own. The sheer magnitude of the destruction and slaughter in this city has generated powerful magical effects. All malign (reversed) necromantic spells are saved against with a -4 penalty here. Undead are turned as if the priest was six levels lower than his normal experience level. Reversed healing spells always inflict maximum damage. For example, a cause light wounds spell thus causes 8 points of damage. There are also a number of special magical effects which apply to particular spells; e.g., speak with dead has a 50% chance (less 1% per point of Wisdom of the spellcaster) of sending the querying cleric immediately insane. The DM should modify other spell effects to reflect these general themes as appropriate.

Chathold's ruins most certainly contain many lost treasures. The aim of those who destroyed this city was simply to lay waste to everything they could find, not to loot anything. The overking's troops and mages had no thought of retrieving relics from the cathedrals of good-aligned powers.

However, the horrors of this place have turned the hair of the few to have entered here white overnight. If an adventure is to be played here, this place must be presented as ghastly. For example, the ruins of this city assail the senses of any entering with a frightful intensity of impactful horror. More than 5,000 people perished in the Day of Dust, and their physical and spiritual remains haunt these ruins. Adventurers entering Chathold's ruins embark on the aftermath of an apocalypse.

## Harskern

This village appears typical of the handful which have not been decimated by raiding armies or fiends. There are 300 or more villagers who go about their business of daily life almost as if nothing had changed. Harskern is not raided, it appears, and the traveler might wonder why this is so. Querying one of the locals will not bring any reply; they are silent and avoid questions and strangers.

The reason for this is that the "village militia" is not what it seems. This group of 20 men-at-arms are actually disguised priests of Iuz and veteran fighters (levels 5 to 10). They are aided by a pair of mages and two thief-scouts. Harskern is the base from which Iuz's agents spy on events in Almor. Iuz is well aware of Pazrael's scheming and so ensures he has first-hand observations of what happens here. From time to time Iuz may even send one of his Boneheart wizards here for a full report, though this is rare. The villagers know that these folk are evil. They don't know for sure that they serve Iuz, because they prefer not to know.

At least these occupiers keep raiders at bay. Wandering orc militias and bandits have been swiftly slain by Iuz's men, who have made sure that none escape to raise any warnings. Moreover, Iuz's servants do not mistreat the villagers, much as they would like to, since they do not want to give the game away to casual visitors.

Harskern offers a change of scene for a campaign, since there is a dilemma for good-aligned PCs: if they root out the evil of Iuz, they may leave this village defenseless against the bandits and deserters who have burned down and pillaged so many others just like it.

## Millennium

This black stone castle has stood for just under half the duration of the thousand-year rule the first overking proclaimed as his empire's fate. Millennium withstood a siege by Szeffrin's forces for three months during the final phase of the wars, and the Pact of Greyhawk allowed the Nyronde survivors—only 300 of the 1,500 who were originally garrisoned here—to depart in safety. Nyronde being forced to give up the lands around the castle.

Millennium stands above a warren of sea caves and caverns, further excavated over the centuries. The fiends which have taken up residence in the castle (and the Nyronde have seen greater tanar'ri here) have begun the task of filling those catacombs with an undead army from the bodies of those who fell defending the castle. Disease-ridden corpses are floated down the shoreline into Mithat Bay in the hope of infecting Nyronde folk, though most bodies are kept for animation.

Millennium is primarily garrisoned by orcish troops, with fiend commanders; there are few humans here. Because the departing Nyronde were searched by

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Szeffrin's gloating servitors, some treasures and precious items had to be left behind when the castle was evacuated. The orc warlords here also use this castle to stash their war booty, so there is fair treasure to be had for anyone prepared to face the defenders of this redoubtable castle.

## Narsel Mendred

These ruins were once the second city of Almor, not as populous as Chathold, but wealthy, well-built, and a pleasing sight to the eye. Orc armies decimated the city with siege weaponry, so that the semi-deserted city ruins are filled with debris and rubble. Perhaps only a tenth of the city's buildings are still standing in anything like their pre-war condition, and fully half have been razed.

The city ruins are the haunt of desperate Almorian refugees, men turned to banditry, renegade orc militias, and occasionally a solitary fiend prowling for prey (nabassu favor Narsel Mendred as a hunting ground). While there are not the horrors of Chathold here, the inhabitants are desperate and dangerous, and strangers will be attacked more or less on sight. A tiny enclave of priests of Pholtus struggles to survive here, guarding the rescued treasures of their power's shattered cathedral with their lives. A trio of young priests of Ehlonna, caught up in the razing of the city, hides in an undercity-crypt complex, protecting a ragged bunch of 40 young children they ushered out of a school just after the orcs breached the city gates. They must perforce go above ground to find what food they can, from the wild plants growing in the old city gardens, but their lot is desperate.

The ruins of this city contain several such tiny pockets of pitiable folk, hoping against hope for someone to come and lead them to safety. Any who do so would, in their way, further the cause of Good as much as if they retrieved some icon or relic from a sacred site in such a place.

## Onyxgate

This site is marked by a simple square keep which appears innocuous. The truth is different. There are dungeon and cavern complexes at least a mile deep below it, disguised by illusions and protected by magical barriers and wards. Spies report that fiends regularly leave Onyxgate for other locations, especially Bloodcrystal. Since the site radiates the presence of conjuration/summoning magic strongly, it is clear that some form of gate to the Abyss must lie beneath the surface. It is also known that several priests of Hextor stay cloistered within the keep, and Nyronese rumors filter back to western lands whispering that at least one knows the secrets of revivification.

Worse still, there are persistent rumors that a dark magical artifact is responsible for the gate, and that

Xaene's inscrutable hand is at work in having placed it here. This may or may not be true, as is usually the case with such fearful whisperings.

Some Nyronese military men favor a strike on Onyxgate to lessen the threat to Nyron and weaken Szeffrin, but King Archbold will not countenance this. He believes he cannot order an army or squad to risk a fate worse than death by ordering them to assault this desperately dangerous place. This is not to say that he wouldn't favor a strike by a small, elite group of high-level PCs.

In addition to priests and fiends, the dungeons of Onyxgate contain both "mundane" undead, such as zombies and skeletons, and more spectral undead, such as wraiths, spectres, and worse. Nabassu here include the least mature type (arriving) and fully matured ones (about to depart for the Abyss).

There are also several spellcasting cambions, including a pair who can use *charm monster* spells to force monsters of the dungeons—ropers, xorn, and some grey stony-skinned basilisks of AC 0—into servitude. Slaves are used to expand the dungeon complex, which is also used as a prison for a handful of Szeffrin's most hated captives, including at least two rival Aerdy generals.

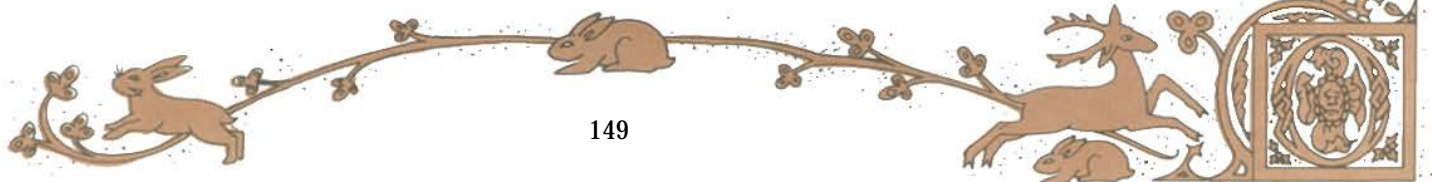
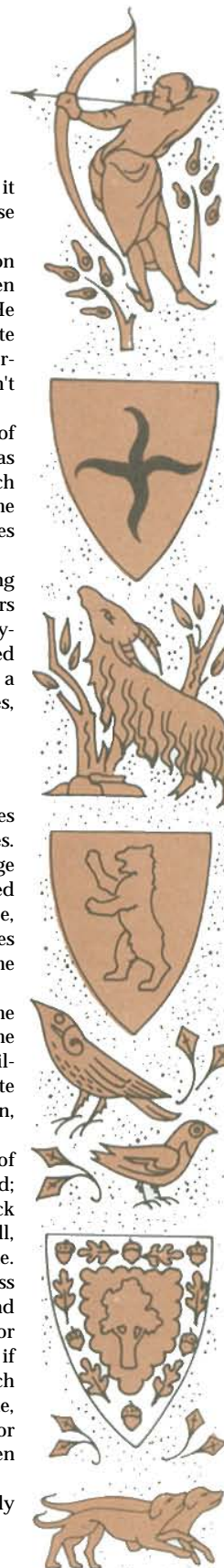
## Shroudgate

This location is not shown on the map because it moves around, appearing from time to time in different places. Shroudgate is a fortified mansion of especially strange design. The windows of the building show distorted reflections of anyone peering into them from the outside, as if they were one-way mirrors. Leering stone gargoyles flank the gray-coated iron gates, staring down from the guttering of the nested angular roof complex.

The house has a large east wing and a smaller west one abutting on to the central hall and living chambers. The place never can be seen in open terrain in normal visibility; the handful of people who have entered Shroudgate and lived to tell the tale blundered into it in driving rain, winter fog, mist, or some similar condition.

Shroudgate has internal architecture and decoration of ancient Oeridian design. From the outside it looks odd; from the inside, it is like entering a time warp going back a millennium. The only apparent occupant is a small, limping, withered elf male who does not reveal his name. He appears to be normal flesh and blood, but he can pass through walls and objects as if they did not exist, and likewise objects can pass right through him—as one or two who have raised weapons against him could testify if they were still alive. In the flickering candlelight which always illuminates the gloomy interior of Shroudgate, from certain angles it seems as if the elf is immaterial or semi-material, and the name The Spectre has been given to him.

Those who call him by this name find him slightly





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amused by it, but seemingly not offended.

The Spectre receives visitors in different ways. Primarily, he is interested in conversing with mages and sages, or travelers who have up-to-date knowledge of events in Aerdy and the Flanaess generally. To such folk he is politely welcoming, offering greetings and hospitality. This is probably the only chance anyone will have of quaffing drinkable 1,000 year old wine.

Somehow, The Spectre seems to say very little while wringing out of his guests everything he might want to learn, even if they breach discretions and give away secrets by so doing. On rare occasions, The Spectre may say something of historical events, very often in the form of first-hand eye-witness accounts. His age is unknown, but it must pass beyond the thousand-year mark. While his voice is normally even, with a slight hint of sardonic irony here and there, if he chooses to describe the Invoked Devastation his words sound as if his own eyes saw the full horror of it.

Shroudgate is intensely magical and contains an endless number of minor unique magical items. The Spectre never has to pour wine for his guests; the decanter pours and refills itself. Words spoken by guests are recorded in huge leather-bound vellum tomes by a levitating, scribbling quill which never runs out of ink. The Spectre does not permit visitors to consult his records.

Chairs draw back from tables to allow visitors to sit on them, while the napkins at meal tables place themselves on diner's laps and automatically absorb any crumbs of food spilled on them. Certainly, The Spectre owns more impressive items, and even artifacts, but he does not reveal these to his guests.

One of his inner sanctums is a room filled with untold thousands of hourglasses, in which the sands of time run out for people, nations, and powers across the Flanaess. There is an icon of Istus therein, but whether The Spectre reveres her, or serves her purposes, is unknown.

Visitors to Shroudgate be warned: while The Spectre will accommodate those who call on him and are agreeable to him, he never sleeps and cannot be surprised, controlled, dispelled, or harmed by weapon or magic. And to sleep even one night in Shroudgate is perilous. One may wake and leave to find that 50 years of time have passed in the world outside the gates.

A visit to Shroudgate in a campaign should be special, eerie, and disorientating. The unblinking, white-haired tiny elf is a creature out of time, timeless and strange, who appreciates wit and humor, but expels oafs or aggressive individuals instantly. Stupidity gets one dumped back in the storm outside; aggression is rewarded with a devastating magical riposte. The Spectre cares not for racial or alignment factors. For example, he prefers a smart dwarf to a tongue-tied elf.

His challenge, if you like, is in his habitual expression

"Tell me." If a visitor has interesting things to say, he will be welcomed. And if The Spectre is in a good mood, he might give some gift of information or minor unique magic item.

The Spectre does not show any emotive response to anything he is told, with one exception—he grows animated if any visitor can tell him anything about Philidor, the Blue Wizard of Greyhawk City and the Vesve forest. "So he's come at last!" is his excited response to that. If his visitor has met or observed Philidor, The Spectre will interrogate him keenly, his quill scribbling frantically all the while, but the elf does not reveal anything about his knowledge of that peculiar mage.

If asked about himself, The Spectre deflects such queries with a statement along the lines of, "All in good time. We shall see all in the fullness of time."

The Spectre isn't a killable or controllable character. *Charm*, *sleep*, *hold*, etc. are a waste of time. Even a *wish* won't achieve anything inside Shroudgate. If he is attacked, he is effectively impervious to harm. He has the spellcasting abilities of a 19th-level mage, and he generally uses power words to teach those attacking him a lesson.

## Tirian

Tirian is a village of 420 folk, a small rural farming community. That it has not been overrun is due to a small group of Almorian men and women, remnants of the Irregulars, an elite force of mercenaries and specialists. Their leader, Bajastelle Renderan, is a priestess of Mayaheine, converted to the new faith because of a vision she experienced after the Irregulars were largely destroyed by the imperial forces on their fateful march to Chathold.

One of a very few survivors from her battalion, she believed herself an unworthy survivor and was sunk into despair when a vision of the demipower appeared to her and sternly told her to get up off her knees and do something about those a lot less able to defend themselves.

Bajastelle is a charismatic leader and she has some 25 veteran Irregulars, mostly heavy infantry. In addition to them are three ranger-scouts and a priest of Pelor. Her goal is to get the folk of Tirian to some place of safety. Ideally, she hopes to strike out for Nyrond. The problem, of course, is that Tirian is distant from any even relatively safe place (the Flinty Hills are another possibility).

There are a few other such places in Almor where small groups are in dire need of rescue, but for PCs Tirian is the most interesting. Bajastelle and her surviving troops are well-disciplined and hardy, and if helped to save the village people by a group of intelligent and caring PCs they would be prepared to pledge service to them in return. Especially for PCs who are of sufficient experience

level to attract followers, rescuing this community would make for an excellent adventure, since the charismatic young warrior-priestess would make an excellent, and wholly trustworthy, second-in-command. Of course, this is provided that the PCs she serves are worthy of her assistance.

## Personalities of Almor

**Bajastelle Renderan:** 8th-level fighter/5th-level priestess of Mayaheine (Str 17, Con 15, Wis 17, Cha 17). AC 0 (*chain mail* +2, *shield* +2), hp 64, AL LG. Bajastelle is 28, 5' 9", distractingly curvaceous, with straight dark blonde hair and hazel eyes. Her family has farmed and lived in Tirian for generations, and her parents and two sisters are among the folk still surviving there. Her band of warriors are likewise survivors, from the local area and lands around, who retreated after their army was shattered by Szeffrin's advancing forces. With their leaders and many of their fellows slain, they came home to protect and attempt to save their kin.

Bajastelle knows Almor well in terms of geography, roads, trails, and places to forage. Planning a mass evacuation of the village is difficult, though. Emotionally it is a great wrench. The logistics are difficult; simply getting enough food along the way is a major problem. Likewise, the very young and the old slow down movement rates, although Tirian has some 40 horses and a few wagons. The wagons could only be used along primary or secondary roads.

The major problem is that this group is short on magical firepower, having no mage among them to use illusion spells to disguise and protect, for example. A PC group with a good mage among them would make a huge difference to the Tirianers' survival chances.

This young woman is resilient and always optimistic. She has the zeal of a convert, and her energy seems inexhaustible. Her troops admire her, and indeed are proud of her. Even high-level PCs should not regard her as some kind of adjutant. If they are smart, they will treat her as an equal. Her troops are almost followers of hers, and will bristle if she is not treated with respect.

**Imagena:** Alu-fiend with abilities of 9th-level mage (Str 17, Int 18). AC 3 (*ring of protection* +2), hp 32, AL N. Imagena is not listed above, since she wanders Almor widely. Posing as a human mage, her robes hide her wings. She is 5' 5", slim, dark-haired and brown-eyed. She wears much facial make-up, disguising her give-away eyebrows, and she deliberately appears fastidious and vain.

Imagena was gated to serve Szeffrin, but she hates the animus. On a whim Szeffrin had her brutally punished for some minor misdemeanor, and she fled Bloodcrystal. Now she wanders Almor alone, giving what help she can

to any who appear able to strike any kind of blow against the duke's forces or citadels. She knows much (but not all) of what is going on in Bloodcrystal and Onyxgate, and she could provide much information to PCs about those places and their defenders. She will not do so, however, unless she has first-hand evidence that the PCs are capable and competent adventurers able to do something about events in Almor. That means observing them closely for a while, and certainly seeing how the PCs cope with combats with troops, fiends, and the like.

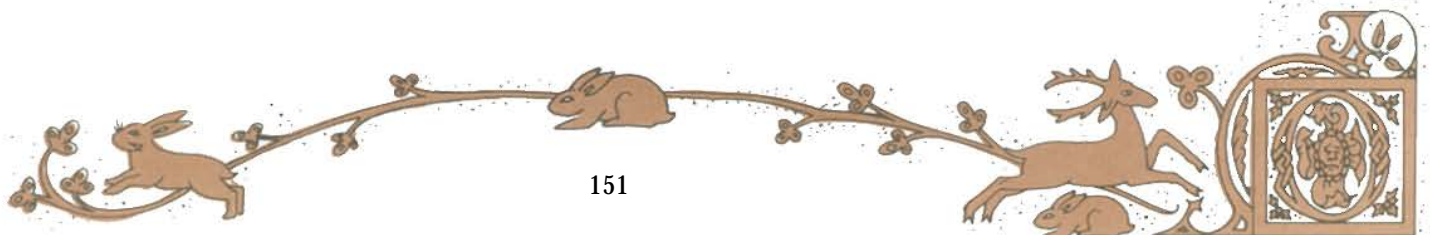
Imagena will not reveal her true nature voluntarily, and her magic resistance might neutralize *know alignment* spells and other enchantments. If she is detected for what she is, she will truthfully recount her story. If attacked, she will use her *dimension door* or *teleport* spells to escape.

Imagena has a *dagger* +3 and a *wand of illusion* with 12 charges remaining. She is loath to use the latter, saving its charges for emergencies.

**Duke Szeffrin:** Animus with abilities of 15th-level fighter (Str 18/00, Con 18). AC -5 (*plate mail* +4, *shield* +3), hp 121, AL NE. Szeffrin is a freak: he stands exactly seven feet tall, and some have wondered if there is ogrish blood in his veins. Revivification has frozen his features into a virtual death mask. His skin is ashen, his brown eyes unblinking, and his expression unchanging. Oddly, the duke is fastidious about his personal appearance. He spends nearly 20 minutes shaving each day, and his thick black hair is always precisely cropped. Szeffrin has tattoos of dragons on his forearms, a mark of his having slain two such beasts with his *longsword* +2, *dragon slayer*. That weapon is intelligent (Int 17) and aligned, with the primary powers of *detect good and evil*, *detect magic*, and *locate object*. Its extraordinary power is X-ray vision. The weapon's special purpose is to slay creatures of NG alignment, and its special purpose power is *disintegrate*.

Szeffrin was one of Ivid's best generals, and he is a fine army commander and strategist (though a little over-traditional). He never cared how many of his men were slain in battle so long as the day was won; now that many of his forces are undead this is not a substantial weakness. The orcs of Almor are happy enough because they are allowed to loot and pillage freely, but they are terrified of their grim master. Likewise, Szeffrin's human troops are scared witless of the man, but they have poorer morale than the orcs because Szeffrin keeps many of them confined to barracks. And they loathe the proximity of undead creatures and fiends.

Szeffrin does not worry much about the fine details of his dealings with Pazrael. So long as he gets the forces he wants to march on Rauxes and destroy Ivid, that will do. Szeffrin doesn't worry about his own fate either. He has the self-hatred of most animuses. Ideally, he would like to leave Pazrael and his fiends to slay more or less anyone they can get their hands on right across Aerdy and meet





# The Almorian Lands

the release of death himself.

Szeffrin watches Nyronnd with some amusement. He knows the westerners are afraid of him, and he organizes a few raids not to disappoint them. But he has no real interest in Nyronnd, so long as the troops there remain entrenched in defensive positions and do not interfere with his plans.

Szeffrin has mastered himself these days. He is not prone to the angers and rages of the past. He disciplines himself with precise daily rituals to suppress his dark emotions, but that is not without cost. Szeffrin is effectively permanently depressed; his energy is sapped and he seems deadened. However, when the time comes for his advance on Rauxes, he will surely come to life—as much as that is possible for an undead creature, of course. Along the way, disposing of Ferrenan is a prospect he looks forward to.

Szeffrin's steed is a nightmare, a gift from Pazrael, and a beast of truly fearsome kind (7+7 HD, 63 hp, and can breathe a *stinking cloud* three times a day).

## Across the Border

DMs wishing to set adventures in Almor for PCs based in Nyronnd will need *The Marklands*. For Aerdy PCs, a retreat

into Nyronnd may be forced if skirmishes in Almor become heated, so the following brief notes on Nyronndese locations are provided for DMs without *The Marklands*.

**Blazebane:** This is a five-towered stone castle with a ring of external standing stones in the castle moat, which can be used to generate *walls of fire* to assail attackers. King Archbold of Nyronnd has 1,600 troops here.

**Kurast's Tower:** Set at the source of the Flessern River, this garrison of 400 troops looks with some consternation at the tower of the apparently forgetful and eccentric mage Kurast, a water elemental whose summoned elementals have more than once struck devastatingly at orcs attempting to advance into Nyronnd.

**Mithat:** This walled city of 28,000 has a massive standing army (4,000 naval militia and 3,000 infantry and cavalry). It is the most important Nyronndese naval base, a city with good morale and law-abiding folk. Hugarnd, the Nyronndese Fleet Admiral, is here, and major Nyronndese generals and the king himself are frequent visitors.

**Sword Road:** This is patrolled night and day by bands of 22 to 60 (20+2d20) Nyronndese infantry, including 1d4+1 officer-leaders, fighters of levels 4-7. They are ever-vigilant. Provisioning wagons likewise regularly travel this road, supplying its bristling array of watch posts.

# Whispers and Ventures

This chapter explains how to develop adventures and campaigns in the lands of Aerdy. Adventures suitable for PCs of all levels of experience are outlined here, together with plentiful notes for the DM on running them.

## Player Character Base

The goals which PCs may have in Aerdy will depend very much on where they come from. If they are based in a foreign land, such as Nyrond, Urnst, or Greyhawk City, then they are going to have a very different agenda to what they would have if they came from the Great Kingdom itself. Also, they are going to have very different knowledge of the place.

Foreigners will know little more than rumors of a great empire which has been sealed off by war for years. The DM should make foreign PCs work hard to learn who is who, and what's been happening.

The assumption is made here that PCs are of good or neutral alignment, wishing to oppose evil factions and forces in Aerdy. Even if this is not so, many of the points made still apply. Logistic and tactical points do, and even evil PCs will have many of the same enemies which non-evil PCs would.

The DM needs to have a strategic understanding of what the PCs are trying to do. What are their ultimate goals? If they simply want to beat up on evil wherever they find it, there's plenty of scope. However, a group which wants to remove some area of land from the control of evil is playing a much deeper and more dangerous game. Foreign PCs might simply want to neutralize and sabotage the Aerdy evils on the boundaries of their homelands (most obviously, in Almor, Innspa, or the southern Darman lands and Ahlissa if the PCs come from Sunndi or Irongate).

Getting the goals for a campaign straight is important. Obviously, with rescue and retrieval missions, for example, this doesn't need so much thinking about.

## Styles of Game Play

The Aerdy lands can be used for any type of adventure. It depends on what players and DMs most enjoy here.

### Combat and Battle

For players who enjoy plenty of combat, the Aerdy lands offer many enemies for any level of PC experience.

For larger-scale battles against powerful enemies, the Almor setting is the most obvious one to use. The fiends and priests here, with orcish, undead, and imperial armies, present formidable opposition. Locations such as Onyxgate and Bloodcrystal are citadels which are tough even for high-level PCs to assail. For mid-level PCs, battles with Bone March humanoids are a good option.

Battles also certainly can be had in Medegia, but given the chaos of that land, there is likely little purpose to this.

Skirmishing is possible all over the place. The most likely options are the margins of the Adri and Grandwood Forests and the Lone Heath, where PCs can defend settlements of good-aligned folk and mount raids on supply wagons and the like for the benefit of beleaguered people.

Sea adventures shouldn't be overlooked. Raids on Ahlissan ports, or suppression of Ahlissan pirates, would be very helpful to Nyrond.

The DM will need to think long and hard about major land battles in areas where princes rule, such as Darman lands and Naelax lands. Such battles are only likely to take place when someone has made the fateful decision to march on Rauxes and proclaim himself overking. When that happens, there is going to be a major power change if the pretender to the throne is successful. The DM needs to be prepared for the consequences of that, which are going to be very significant. Rivals will need to be dealt with, and there's the little matter of confronting the enormous military and magical might of Rauxes itself!

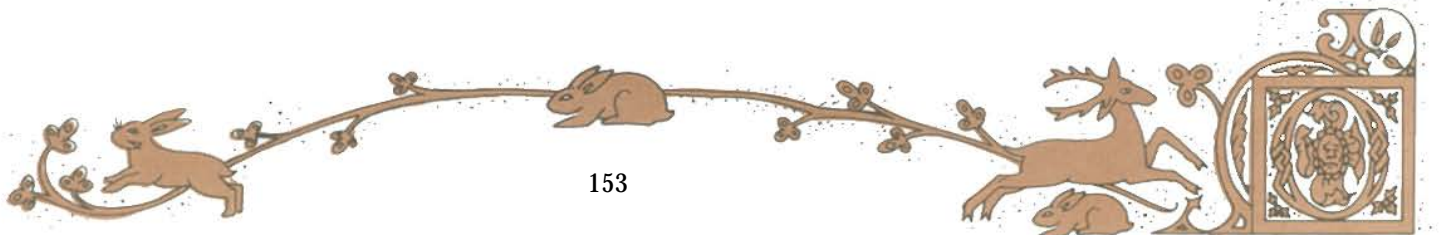
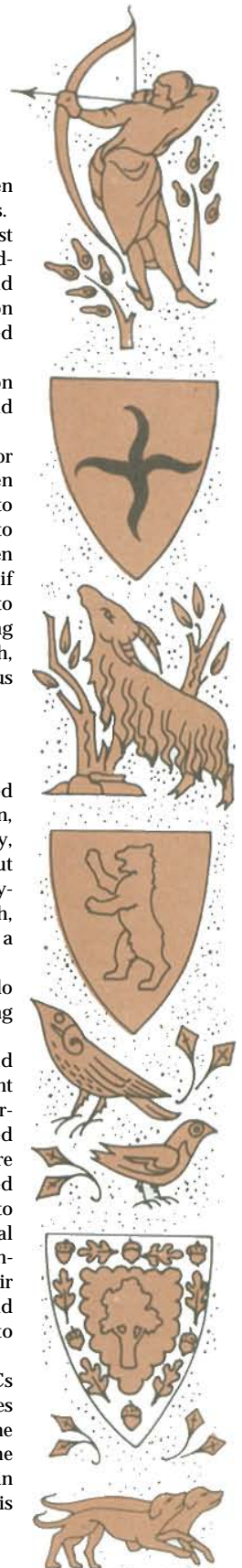
### Investigation and Discovery

For players who enjoy adventures with story goals based on investigation, acquisition of learning, and information, the Aerdy lands offer a realm of possibilities. Obviously, this sourcebook provides a lot of information about Aerdy, but PCs—especially outsiders or even Aerdy-based PCs from areas such as the Adri or Lone Heath, who have not traveled widely—won't know more than a tiny fraction of it.

The key decision here is: what kind of mystery do players like getting into, and what style of play is going to get the information they seek?

Aerdy contains many arcane secrets, such as the old sites of the Ur-Flannae mystics, the Cauldron of Night and the Fading Grounds, the unknown patterns generated by The Walker in Medegia, and the secrets guarded by The Sentinels of the Coldwood. Here, the PCs are getting into magical and arcane secrets. They will need the help of sages and mystics, which means traveling to find them and paying them in some currency (magical items, service, information). They may attract the attention of powerful, magical beings opposed to their meddling. The dangers they will face may be unseen and unsuspected. This is dangerous territory and not suited to low-level PCs.

At a much simpler level, the information sought by PCs may be more down-to-earth; logistic, tactical. When does that rich merchant caravan from Rel Astra come along the northern road so that we can ambush it and feed the people of the Lone Heath? What are Reydrich's plans in building those keeps along the Grayflood? When do his





# Whispers and Ventures

troops patrol, so that Sunndi guerrillas can strike them down? This kind of investigation is well-suited to lower-level PCs, especially those of a chaotic bent who enjoy skirmishing on the margins of free lands.

Players may enjoy politics and intrigue, which is a very different type of investigative operation.

## Role-Playing And Intrigue

The Aerdy lands are an absolute den of conspiracies and intrigues. There are dozens of princes who will pay for trustworthy spies to find out what their rivals are up to. PCs of all levels can become engaged in such activities. Powerful ones will draw the attention of a major power-player like Xavener of Kalstrand or Strychan of Dustbridge. Low-level PCs may be employed by a minor liegeman of such a great prince, which allows them to earn their spurs by serving an underling and working their way up the greasy pole. The Naelax and Darmen lands offer the best opportunities for such intrigues.

## Tough Choices

One of the greatest strengths of the Aerdy setting is that it allows the DM to present PCs with some extremely difficult moral and tactical dilemmas. At a simple tactical level, PCs can be approached to act as spies by two rival princes to spy on each other. Each prince makes it plain that either the PCs serve him or they come to an unfortunate end. What do the PCs do?

Moral dilemmas can likewise be thrown at the PCs. Because so much of Aerdy is evil, good-aligned PCs can be thrown into really grisly dilemmas. Here's an example: Carwend of Rel Deven asks the PCs to protect Prince Ferrenan of Blacksplinter. The reason is that Carwend needs Ferrenan's support. He needs the money and magical items Ferrenan supplies from time to time. He knows Ferrenan is going to be magically attacked by Szeffrin, with his fiendish and mage allies. If Ferrenan is destroyed, the western lands will be weakened and many of the ordinary folk who live there will be destroyed as Almorian fiends and orcs sweep into the lands. So, the job for good-aligned PCs is to act as bodyguards for a vampire-necromancer. What do they do? If they just refuse and walk away, thousands of ordinary, good-aligned people may die.

One option would be to take over Blacksplinter, but that would be a poor choice. Part of Ferrenan's support of Carwend is the information he gets from undead servitors. That will give Carwend warning of an Almorian warband planning invasion, and if the PCs slay Ferrenan, that warning will be lost.

There are lots of ways to throw nasty curves like this to players. Very often, good-aligned PCs can be put in the position of having to choose between two evils. They may have to ally with one evil to oppose another, stronger

one. It forces players to think hard about the moral bottom line their characters have. From the DM's point of view, it's also nice because good-aligned priests and paladins may have to undergo atonement for whichever course of action they take—which allows the DM to set those PCs on a suitable quest in the future.

## Adventure Themes

There are several broad themes for adventures in the Aerdy lands, each of which is discussed below. However, one word of warning. Oerth is a game setting which has been through the upheavals of the Greyhawk Wars. Players need some time to come to terms with the changes in the game world. The one campaign theme which a DM needs to be very careful about is the overthrow scenario, where Ivid is toppled and another prince rises to the malachite throne. This will have powerful consequences, as noted. It's best not to use this initially, and instead to focus on making preparations for this—recruiting forces, making allies through negotiations, gaining magical items through adventuring, spying on Rauxes, and so on.

The one campaign theme which is right out the window is allowing any group of PCs to take the throne themselves, no matter how powerful they may be. If they are not evil, then virtually all the major powerplayers of the land will rise up against them. There even may be direct intervention by an evil power, probably Hextor. The good powers actually owe the evil ones one such direct intervention without reprisal, after St. Cuthbert's actions against Iuz, and a Neutral power such as Istus would probably aid Hextor.

If the PCs are evil, then they are in for a constant stream of armies arriving at the capital, expert assassins, aerial servants, fiends, and much besides. Their lives won't be worth living; the DM has to make sure of that.

## Rescue and Retrieval Missions

Especially suitable for one-night adventures, PCs may have to enter Aerdy to recover someone or something of importance. Examples of such adventures include:

**Relic Retrieval:** The gazetteer chapters have many references to relics. There are both good-aligned relics lost in temples of Pholtus and other such powers, and buried evil relics and artifacts the destruction of which may be vital to preventing a powerful evil faction from growing more powerful still. A location such as Spikerift puts a nice spin on this; retrieving a good-aligned artifact means unleashing some evil, so PCs must deal with that as a necessary price to pay for taking the good power of the item. Putting such a spin on an adventure of this type always spices things up. Such adventures are suitable for mid- or high-level PCs. For high-level PCs, placing the

# Whispers and Ventures

relic in a place such as Pontylver or Chathold, a bastion of evil such as Onyxgate, or a magically strange and dangerous location such as below the Causeway of Fiends, allows the DM to throw the kind of opposition at them which makes for a challenging adventure. One example would be a commission to obtain a suit of *fiend armor* for study.

**Rescue the People:** There are also pockets of non-evil folk in Aerdy needing rescue. Almor is the most obvious example here. Rescuing the children of Narsel Mendred is a case in point. Tirian offers a still greater challenge, for the PCs have to organize the evacuation of a sizeable population. Don't allow them any easy options such as *gate* spells or an *amulet of the planes*, *mirror of mental prowess*, etc. to move many people fast. Tirian also has a good payoff in the form of potential followers. Rescuing the Tirianers is an ideal adventure for PCs of 9th level who are looking for followers.

**Into The Unknown:** A variant on the "retrieve the relic" mission, PCs may be asked to discover exactly what something is, or what's going on in some place or other. Thus, it might be known that Karoolck is manufacturing something in the Cauldron of Night which could save Ivid's existence, although no one knows exactly what it is. The PCs have to find out. Ideally, they might have to bring back the item Karoolck is making for study by a powerful NPC wizard such as Kieren Jalucian of Greyhawk, so that if Karoolck tries again, counter-measures could be taken.

A spin can be put on this by using the Coldwood setting. It is known that some great evil magic is stirring there. The PCs must seek it out and destroy it or render it latent, studying all they can of the magical changes. That, unfortunately, means they must deal with The Sentinels who don't let anyone enter unless they have some very persuasive arguments (which may require an adventure to find, research, sage consultations, etc.).

## Sabotage!

The general theme of such adventures is handicapping powerful evil forces by somehow eliminating or weakening their supply lines and resources. There are endless options here.

**Guerrilla Warfare:** For chaotic PCs, this is perfect. Continually harassing supply trains headed into and out of Edge Field, Rel Astra, Roland, Permanence, or similar locations from the cover of the Adri or Grandwood, or a hill range, is a simple but effective way of weakening evil power centers.

**Kidnap:** A time-honored Aerdy tradition, kidnapping the wife/husband/lover/best liegeman of a noble can be an effective way of getting money, food, equipment and supplies for beleaguered good-aligned folk while simultaneously weakening an evil ruler. Strictly LG characters

might be queasy about this, however.

**Sow Dissension:** Aerdy's grapevine is alive with all kinds of rumors about who is allying with who, who secretly dislikes another, and so on. PCs can spread such rumors to great effect themselves, but they have to marshal some supporting evidence for their rumormongering. They may need to discover that by espionage or by manufacturing it themselves.

**Revealing treachery among subordinates** can be a very effective strategy for weakening evil. Unmasking Karnquiza as an agent of the Scarlet Brotherhood in Zelradton would worry Reydrich a great deal and lead him to abandon his lands south of the Grayflood to Sunndi men, as he withdrew extra forces back into his city. Providing evidence of Balraize's double-dealings at Permanence could cause reactions at the courts of Strychan and Montand, and unsettle General Kalraith, perhaps making him crucially less likely to march out from his citadel. Subtler possibilities can be envisaged aplenty.

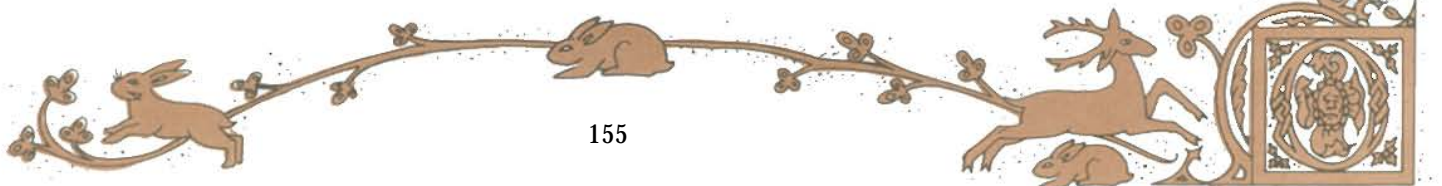
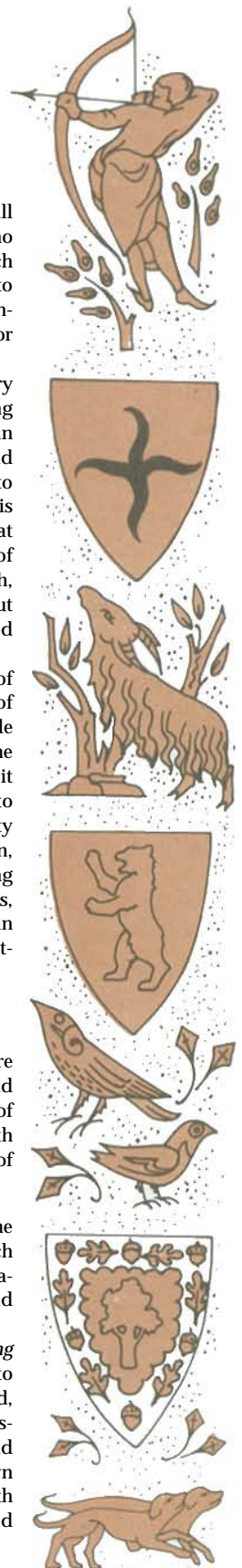
**Weaken Defenses:** As one example, the effects of destroying the aqueducts and watery defenses of Hexpools would be considerable, on both public morale and health. Further, it would drown a lot of troops if the waters could be directed properly by saboteurs, and it could impact on the willingness of the Darmen princes to ride out to a war against the overking. Sabotaging city walls almost anywhere will throw rulers into confusion, forcing them to defend their city rather than making aggressive plans (unless they are not rational; animuses, for example). Simple sabotage operations can be vital in buying time for some beleaguered enclave of good threatened by a powerful military force nearby.

## Create Alliances and Communications

There are good people in these evil lands, but they are separated geographically and often don't understand each other's goals and needs. They may have conflicts of their own (the aggressive stance of the Lone Heath rangers as compared with the more uncertain attitude of the Grandwooders is a good example).

**Communications:** Part of creating wider alliances is the need for better communication. An adventure which allows PCs to set up some form of magical communication network between the Adri and Grandwood and Lone Heath would achieve a great deal.

**Teleportations:** Also, acquiring some way of *teleporting* significant quantities of goods from one location to another would help. The Grandwooders have much food, but need weapons. If, somehow, that food could be transported to Greyhawk City or Irongate then weapons could certainly flow in the opposite direction. Bigby is known to be doing something very like this to link Irongate with Mitrik. Of course, some powerful source of magic would





# Whispers and Ventures

be needed, probably an artifact.

Networks: There are also many small good-aligned groups, pockets of resistance and secret societies (Almorian, the Thelwood voadkyn, the Knights of Sun and Moon, etc.) who don't even know of each other's existence. In many cases they might not be able to help each other much even now, but in the future.... Simply putting them in touch would have a morale-boosting effect. It makes a big difference knowing that one is not alone. A long-term goal might be bringing such folk together and establishing a dominion of their own within the boundaries of Aerdy. The western lands, even parts of Medegia, would offer possibilities for this.

## Dominion!

The Great Kingdom certainly offers PCs the chance to seize or establish some power base and lands, and to rule it themselves. This is only likely, however, if two conditions are met. First, the PCs had better find some area where they don't have powerful neighbors. Setting up camp in the middle of Almor would be stupid. Likewise, proclaiming a new fiefdom in the middle of the Naelax or Darmen lands would be likely to bring a large army to the castle gates in fairly short time. Second, the PCs will need to recruit an army, even if only a small one. Followers alone are unlikely to be enough. They'll need a force capable of protecting their dominion, and driving off likely enemies—or at least holding the fort long enough for the PCs themselves to deal with matters (this is a suitable theme for mid- to high-level PCs only).

An alternative is for the PCs to acquire some realm of their own within Aerdy through serving an existing ruler. If the PCs are non-evil, this will have to be a non-evil NPC, of course. Carwend of Rel Deven would be one obvious possibility. He needs all the help he can get and by establishing a power base in the western lands, and PCs could begin forays into Almor. They would also weaken Carwend's dependence on Ferrenan, allowing them to strike out against the vampire-necromancer himself if they wished to do so. A base south of Atirr might be another possibility, allowing PCs to keep watch over the looming evils of Rinloru.

## Patrons

Some adventures are most easily introduced into a campaign by having a patron commission PCs to go forth and do such-and-such. It's important for the DM not to be transparently arm-twisting about this. It also needs a campaign where that NPC doesn't arrive out of the blue and just pick on the PCs for no logical reason. Players need to feel that there's some logic behind why they are being asked to do something.

For higher-level PCs, one element of any worthwhile

campaign is that they will inevitably attract the attention of high-level NPCs simply because their own actions draw attention to themselves. Kings, court wizards, high priests and the like keep well-informed about the existence of powerful individuals in their lands, areas of study, church hierarchies, and more. A 12th-level PC priest, for example, is going to be regarded by the head of his church in the land as an important agent for furthering the goals of the faith. And that church head is going to start taking a direct interest in his budding junior's achievements and seek to channel them as he sees best. This is obviously especially true of lawfully-aligned faiths. Likewise, news of the deeds of powerful warriors will spread along the grapevine and come to the attention of nobles and rulers, who are mostly desperate for the help of such individuals. Aerdy is a land where armies have been greatly reduced in strength. Everyone wants really fine fighting men and women in their castle, town, city or even large village.

Even for lower-level PCs, higher-level NPCs are going to get news of what they have been up to, and they make seek to recruit the PCs as promising juniors, followers, troop leaders, and so on. The actions of adventurers of any worth always attract someone's attention!

The basic rule with using a patron NPC is that, if the DM really wants to run a certain adventure, assuming the patron isn't evil (in which case coercion and threats will be a primary way of dealing with PCs), it's handy to have a combination of persuasion and potential coercion to hand. With priests and paladins, this isn't so true. The moral authority of a senior priest should be enough (if it isn't, the PC is not being role-played properly and should not be allowed to gain any experience if refusing the request of such an NPC, unless it's grossly unreasonable). In other cases, a patron's initial line will be one of persuasion, offering reward for service.

However, if the quest is a fair one and the PCs refuse, if the patron is of any stature he will have some threat, even if veiled, to try to force compliance ("I'm sorry you won't help us. Our need was great. I hope you enjoyed your wine. By the way, my court wizard placed a *trap the soul* spell on your glass, my friend. Shall we activate the spell's effects or shall we reconsider my proposition?"). Try not to be too coercive about matters—but any worthwhile NPC patron is going to have some such options at his fingertips.

## The High Magical Campaign

The Greyhawk Wars were only part one of the great struggle. The Great Kingdom is virtually certain to disintegrate. Iuz will wage war on Furyondy again, and nations such as Veluna and the Ulek states will have their fates decided by what happens in Furyondy. The Scarlet Brotherhood will strike again to conquer nations, because

# Whispers and Ventures

there is no power to stop it doing so. The Flanaess will be plunged into war again, and what happens during that war will be decisive. There will be no stalemate next time around.

Now, this great war will not happen for a decade or so in all probability. Everyone needs time to build up their strength, defensively and offensively. However, in a real long-term strategic Greyhawk campaign, PCs had better be aware, as are the rulers of great nations, that the day of reckoning will come in their lifetimes. And they'd better do something about it.

This becomes a "save the world" campaign, but not one with apocalyptic battles, a focus on fighting the good fight against pitiless fiends, or anything that simple. Rather, what becomes vital to such a campaign is controlling the very powerful, deep sources of magic lying within Oerth and confronting the powerful extraplanar threats to Oerth.

Oerth's deep magic lies in the form of the dweomer-stones of the central Flanaess, the dark sites such as the Causeway of Fiends and the Cauldron of Night in Aerdy, and in the Fading Grounds scattered around isolated locations. Sites of ancient temples of Tharizdun, and possibly in the remains of the Temple of Elemental Evil, also contain these ancient magics. They take various forms, but usually rather than actually being relics or artifacts they are locations with powerful magical substrates from which relics and artifacts can be manufactured. Think of them as highly dangerous magical lodestones. Those who control these substrates have a powerful edge for the future. Securing ones which can be used, and destroying those which are innately evil, is a vital strategic goal. There are also a handful of unique locations which tap these magical substrates in more direct ways, as the events currently taking place in Tenser's tower demonstrate.

The extraplanar threat angle focuses on the pacts of Iuz (especially) and Szeffrin (to a lesser extent) with very powerful tanar'ri Lords. If these deals go unchecked, the possibility of hordes of fiends swamping the Prime Material becomes a reality. Strategically, it is vital that the forces of good either destroy the preconditions for these pacts or inflict such damage on the fiends already in the Prime Material that their abyssal masters are unwilling to sustain further losses on the same scale.

The final element in this strategic equation is the fate of certain powerful individuals who have the ability to prevent evil from becoming fully triumphant. The vital forces here are: Mordenkainen and the Circle of Five; Archmage Philidor; Gwydiesin; The Walker; The Spectre; the priesthood of Rao in Veluna; the quasipowers Heward, Murlynd, Kelanen, and Keoghtem; Mayaheine, Oerth's new demipower; and a handful of similar beings in lands such as Celene, Ulek, and Keoland. In the grand strategic picture, the unity of action of such mighty

individuals will likely determine the fate of the Flanaess. Don't forget that these people are highly diverse and by no means agree on goals and procedures. Canon Hazen of Veluna City is powerfully Lawful Good; Mordenkainen is as Neutral as they come. There are also some unpredictable elements in the equation of Evil, most notably Vecna and Xaene, whose actions are unknown. Also, there are many other non-evil NPCs who have dealings with these pivotal figures (for example, Kieren Jalucian, the elves of the Timeless Tree in the Vesve forest, and many others) whose support of and flow of information to these luminaries will make an important difference.

For the DM, there isn't any hurry about this. There is no need to begin frantically scripting adventures bringing PCs into contact with these exceptional NPCs, nor flinging them into adventures where they have to enter the horrors of the Cauldron of Night. Rather, just keep in mind that there are places, and people, which fit into a grand magical pattern which Istus alone sees in its fullness. Some of them remain entirely enigmatic. That's deliberate; Philidor, The Walker, and The Spectre should, at this time, remain wholly mysterious. Their timespan of perception covers decades and centuries, and they are not over-hasty.

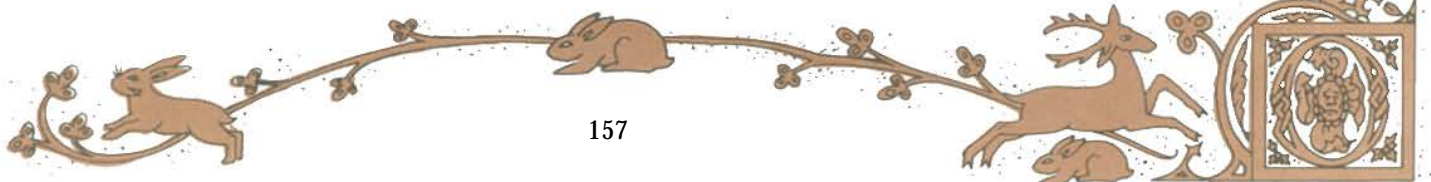
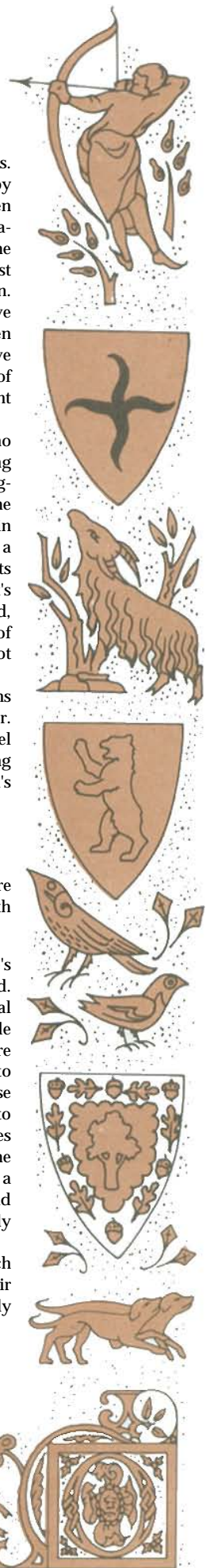
The lands of Aerdy contain both NPCs and locations which are part of this grand theme in significant number. The lands are ones in which PCs of mid- or high-level should definitely become embroiled in if they are going to become important elements of the equation of Oerth's future.

## Final Notes

The Aerdy lands are not easy ones for role-playing. There are some general elements of play here which are worth pondering.

Good PCs: There are many lands in Aerdy where one's alignment or reverence of a power has to be disguised. That should be fairly obvious, but outside of especial circumstances such as attending the court of a noble where priests of Hextor are powerful and will make sure mages check alignments, it should be possible for PCs to go undetected for some time provided that they disguise their alignments. The difficult thing for PCs to come to terms with is seeing evil dominant day-to-day. What does a priest of a power of mercy and kindness do when he sees some drunken orc soldier beating a peasant in a town street? What if that orc has 50 fellows with him, and the PCs are on some important mission and desperately don't want to draw attention to what they're doing?

Any DM worth his salt should test the PCs with such scenes. Players need to have a clear picture of what their characters will do in such painful circumstances. It only





# Whispers and Ventures

takes one PC acting impetuously to ruin an adventure for everyone.

By comparison, neutrally-aligned PCs will not attract suspicion by virtue of their alignment and won't normally have to disguise it in any manner.

**Demihumans:** Life is going to be tough for demihumans. They will always attract attention and suspicion, especially elves closely associated with the rebellious forces in the Grandwood and Adri. It may be essential for PCs to disguise the demihuman nature of one or more of their fellows even during a single adventure, let alone a campaign. This presents obvious problems with dwarves, gnomes, and halflings ("Hmmm. You are very small. Fancy being polymorphed into a human for a day or two?") Alternatively, the PCs better have good cover stories for demihumans being among their number.

**Shot By Your Own Side:** The rangers, elves, and others

of the Lone Heath, Sunndi margins, and the like know that imperial spies and troops often disguise themselves as servants of Good (a logical development of their own posing as imperial troops). Sunndi elf bowmen, in particular, shoot first and cast *Speak with Dead* later. PCs should reason out strategies for persuading such folk of their true nature. Alignment language and reading won't do. The elves know all about misdirection and the like.

**Cover Stories:** It sounds obvious, but the PCs should always have a good reason why they're traveling along some road, across country, etc. Patrols and militias always want to know what any bunch of adventurers is doing on their patch. They may actually try to press-gang them into serving their master, (a scenario well worth springing on PCs now and again). But the PCs have to learn that a plausible cover story is as basic a survival instinct as breathing or eating.

# Forces of the Empire

This chapter gives brief details of the great Aerdy armies, as was and as are, together with some mercenary groups the DM may employ in game play. For space reasons, BATTLESYSTEM® statistics are not provided here, but the DM using that system should nonetheless find the following notes of value.

## "Technology"

Oerth is a game world which has elements of both the Middle Ages and the Dark Ages. It is important to understand what this means for the equipment used by forces.

In *From The Ashes* and subsequent Greyhawk sourcebooks, plate mail is assumed to be the best armor available. Field and full plate do not exist yet, not having been invented. If the DM wishes to allow these superior armors in a Greyhawk campaign, then profiles for NPCs should be amended accordingly; high-level NPCs will have superior armor. This also affects armies—it is assumed that even elite knights only have plate mail.

Second, gunpowder weapons do not exist on Oerth. DMs are strongly advised not to allow such weaponry in Greyhawk campaigns. Thus, armies noted below don't have musketeers or cannons.

Third, spelljamming and psionics are rare. Psionics are strongly featured in the DARK SUN® game setting, but outside of this specific context they can be very problematic for DMs and players. Thus, armies and forces do not have psionics support. Likewise, spelljamming vessels are not part of military units scripted below.

Finally, bowmen troops in Greyhawk don't really fit the historical pattern. The heavy crossbow (arbalest) is actually a mid-15th century development in terms of widespread use, and it was both slower and more appallingly damaging than the AD&D game version, which can be assumed not to have the mechanical winch used for reloading the steel arbalest. Since field and full plate actually predate the arbalest, one should assume that the AD&D game heavy crossbow is not the arbalest of historical reality, although it has that name.

However, don't get bogged down in these rules. This section isn't concerned with every last detail of gorgets used by mounted knights. And Oerth does have superior technology in some departments (e.g., the galleon, and the development of astrolabe and caravel at sea). Rather, use this section to add color to encounters with troops; it focuses on their histories, regalia, and demeanor.

## Armies of the North

Drawn from North Province, there traditionally have been three great armies—the Army of the North, the Rakersmen, and the Imperial Highlanders.

Army of the North: The Army of the North has tradi-

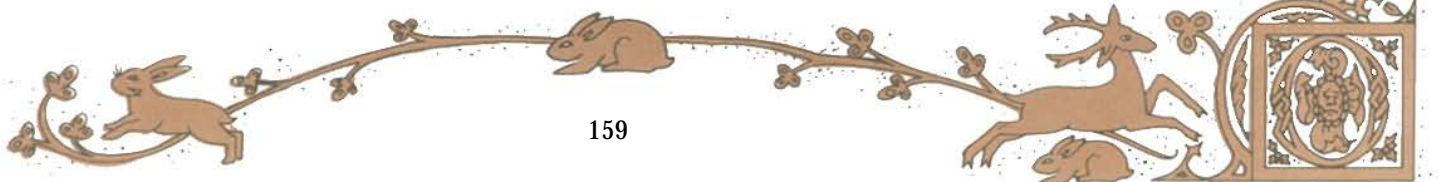
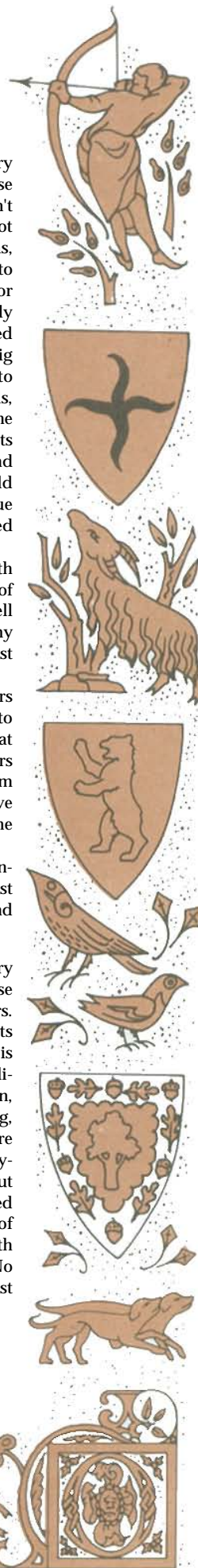
tionally been one of heavy (35%) and light (55%) infantry with little in the way of cavalry support, not least because good horse breeding and bloodstock management hasn't been a traditional skill here. Bowmen have likewise not been much used, not least because North Province has, away from the Adri, not had the kind of terrain to provide cover and ambushing points so helpful for concealing such troops. Cavalry and bowmen form only 10% of this army. Chain mail always has been preferred to plate for reasons of mobility (North Province is a big place and marching infantry may have long distances to cover). Preferred weaponry has been: longswords, daggers, and heavy maces. However, during the Greyhawk Wars elite long spear- and pike-using units were developed for use against Nyrondeese cavalry, and these have become increasingly prominent. The shield design used by the Army of the North is that of a blue serpent coiled around a yellow spiralled sun on a red background, the symbol of North Province itself.

As it stands in North Province, the Army of the North is not greatly diminished by the wars, save for the loss of men to Almor and in the Nyrondeese campaign. Grenell has moved swiftly to replenish these losses, and the Army of the North has fair morale and equipment in most locations.

This army is one of the common soldier. Its officers tend to be practical, common-sense men who are close to their foot-slogging ordinary troops. Possessed of no great intelligence or imagination, most commanding officers are reliable, loyal, but capable of dumb mistakes from time to time. In times of major conflict, raised levies have traditionally been attached to this army rather than to the two elites described below.

The Army of the North has a solid history of campaigning in flatland terrain but is ill-suited to hill or forest warfare or skirmishing. Its units now protect cities and patrol open terrains.

The Rakersmen: These are veteran troops with a history of hill warfare, especially in the Blemu Hills and those north of Bellport—and in the Flinty Hills during the wars. Many, indeed, are hillsmen from those areas, or recruits from the hardy men who inhabit the Rakers. This army is less than a century old, but it is proud of its fighting traditions. Armor worn is a mix of studded leather and chain, and weapons employed are typically short bow or sling, flail or heavy mace, spear, and short sword. Shields are often not used by these men, since missile use is a widely-used tactic and hills provide good cover anyway. But when employed, their shields display the design crossed maces over a craggy hill peak, rendered in shades of brown and gray above a small miniature of the North Province symbol—all on a light gray background. No cavalry units form part of this force, nor do specialist bowmen.

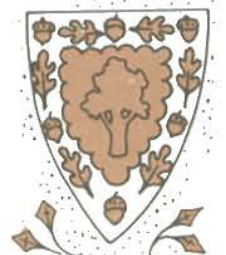
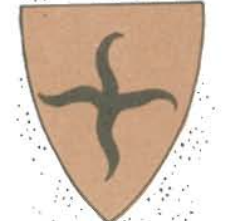




# Forces of the Empire



The Rakersmen are now mostly confined to protective duty in cities, especially Bellport, and their morale is currently not good. Above all, these men hate humanoids and dislike having to ally with them intensely. Many of their leaders are almost openly rebellious about this, which Grenell must tolerate as a letting-off of steam. The Rakersmen are proud soldiers, and have fighting fitness (Con scores of 10+1d8) and, normally, superior morale.



**Imperial Highlanders:** A second elite unit, like the Rakersmen the Highlanders are well used to hill fighting. However, they also have a long history of forest warfare and mixed unit types. While most (80%) are light infantry, the use of light cavalry (10%) in particular has been a hallmark of their operations, and their longbowmen (10%) are justly feared. Their studded-leather armored infantry employ pikes or spears, and short swords. Some 20% are also trained in the use of crossbows, with the others often employing full body shields to protect the crossbowmen during their reloading operations, and to protect the longbowmen units which usually only have short swords in addition to bows. Cavalrymen use chain mail and are equipped with longswords, heavy maces, and lances. Their horses are not usually barded, however, since the advantage of light cavalry is speed. The great body shields of the Highlanders display their own symbol of crossed gray lances over a shattered rock-like symbol. Some say it resembles a crumbling xorn in brown, on a green background, with three small brown chevrons in the top left quadrant. Many Highlander cavalrymen have tattoos of the crossed-lance design on their forearms, and indeed tattooing is a characteristic of most Highlanders in general.

More than any other northern army, the Imperial Highlanders always have had a primary loyalty to their own fraternity and fellowship. They are deeply proud and stubborn men, silent and often infuriating to deal with. But they have superb morale (16) and in their near-250 years have virtually never been known to retreat willingly even in the face of an overwhelming force. They are greatly feared by the orcs of the Bone March, who refer to them as "the wall fiends" (a reference to the solid protective wall of body shields they use in defensive formation).

**Euroz Angry Army:** The premier army of the Bone March, these orcs are equipped in the standard manner (see the *Monstrous Compendium* entry for orcs). However, there is one exception: they rarely employ glaives or similar long weapons, being mostly used to hill warfare. They are especially tough. Fully 20% of the standard 1 HD types will have maximum hit points. Because of their often-disparate sub-tribal origins, they use a variety of shield designs. One design is becoming increasingly uniform: the chalk-white splintered skull motif on a rusty

blood-red background.

## Armies of the South

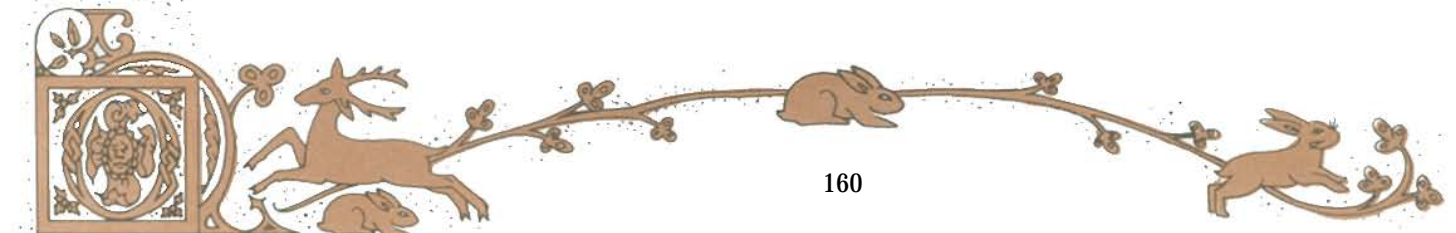
Drawn from Ahlissa, Medegia, and the central-southern lands, two great armies have traditionally dominated here. These are the Glorioles Army and the Army of the South itself.

**The Glorioles Army:** This has been decimated by the Greyhawk Wars. Perhaps only a fifth of its pre-war strength remains intact. The rest was lost in the campaigns against Sunndi, Osson, Medegia, and Almor. Some residual units remain in cities such as Torrich, Nulbish, and Kalstrand, but others are in Szeffrin's service in Almor, or exist as marauders or madmen in Almor, Medegia, and the edges of forests in Aerdy.

The Glorioles Army combined excellent heavy and light cavalry with regular infantry and a fair percentage (25%) of levied infantrymen used to secure "base camp" positions, guard baggage trains and the like. Mercenary cavalry and infantry also has been more widely used in this army than in northern ones, again a factor in the disintegration of the Glorioles Army and the desertion to banditry of many of its remnants. Partly out of shame at its fate, existing units of this army no longer use the old shield and banner design of the army (a heavy destrier bearing a mounted knight, rendered in brown and steely tints on a green background) but use the designs of the cities or nobles they now serve.

Glorioles Army cavalry are a mix, including the heavy plate-clad, heavy lance-using knights of their elite strike units and the much swifter chain-wearing wielders of light lance. Both types of cavalry also employ heavy maces or horseman's flails and have short swords. Infantry (non-levy) wear leather or chain if available and usually employ spears and short swords. Some 30% of the non-levy infantry are specialized pike units or longbowmen, making for a formidable mixed force.

The name "Glorioles Army" actually comes from the origins of the unit in the distant past, when fierce hillsmen from the Glorioles formed the bulk of the nascent southern army, and battles with demihumans of the Glorioles and Hestmark Highlands were a major feature of its operations. The army has actually changed out of all recognition since those times, which is obvious. Cavalry are hardly suited to hills, and Ivid's ordering of them across the Glorioles during the wars was a dumb error. One of the major changes has been the use of humanoid troops, especially in and around the Adri Forest. About 20% of the pre-war Glorioles Army was orcish or half-orcs; these were always infantrymen. Now, in the Darmen and Ahlissan cities, orcs are not part of this army. In Medegia and Almor, they remain part of the existing forces.



# Forces of the Empire

The Glorioles Army has poor morale now. It has been broken and, except when it has a superb commander or leader (such as Reynard of Ahlissa) its men are relatively listless and discouraged, having lost too many fellows and friends during the wars.

**Army of the South:** The Army of the South has unit composition similar to the Glorioles, save that humanoid troops are not part of it and levies are a lower percentage (10%) of the total. This army has retained virtually all its troop strength and both the soldiers and leaders are chafing at the bit. This is an active army, having skirmished with the Iron League for decades, and the army is ready to assail those lands again.

The Army of the South is Ahlissan, and uses as a shield and banner design of a blue boar's head, crowned and tusked, on a yellow background. The army is especially skilled at skirmish actions and in low hill terrain, and its longbowmen are unusually adept at hill warfare and especially keen of eye (15% of them are veterans with +1 to hit targets of S/M size). The light cavalry have mounts trained for hill clambering, although heavy cavalry stays on the plains.

## Armies of the Central Lands

These are the mainstay imperial armies of the overking himself.

Ivid's greatest army always has been known as the Imperial Regulars. The core of this army is heavy and light infantry battalions. Heavy infantry wear chain mail and shield and bear great shields, employing longwords or bastard swords, footman's flails or maces, and heavy daggers. About 25% of Imperial Regulars heavy infantry are pike- and polearm-using units, however. Light infantry use leather armor and shields with most having chain mail vests (base AC 6). These troops have been mostly used for protection of supply lines, and in combat they are employed only when speed is of the essence. Their equipment is variable; typically they have hand arms (clubs, morningstars, hand axes, etc.). But when combat is planned they will be equipped with short bows, pikes, longwords or whatever is most appropriate.

Cavalry is almost always heavy. It is from the plate-clad crushing forces that the elite Companion Guard cavalry is drawn. These cavalry have more destriers than most other heavy cavalry units, and all have chain barding; some even have plate. These huge horses (17 hands and up) are slow, but when the heavy cavalry has roused itself to a charge the effect can be absolutely decisive. Heavy cavalymen are arrogant, proud, and haughty men.

Imperial Regulars always use the design of the old Great Kingdom itself on their shields. This is a crowned yellow spiral sun on a blue background. This is so even

today for Imperial Regulars in Delaric and Dustbridge, since the symbol is one of the old Kingdom, not Ivid's personal symbol.

Specialists are drawn from the Imperial Regulars. The Black Legion of Rauxes has been referred to in the main text. This is a unit of 400 veteran CE fighters, heavy infantry which has been specially equipped with magical aids to mobility (*rings of flying, winged boots, potions of speed, flying carpets*, etc.). This is vital to their role as shock troops, dispatched to quell civil unrest or to strike down any subversion in the Kingdom while giving minimal warning of their impending arrival. The DM is at liberty to devise other such specialist units in the service of major Aerdy powerplayers.

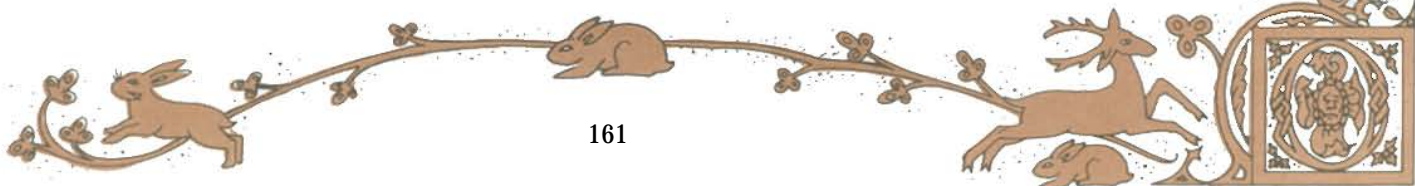
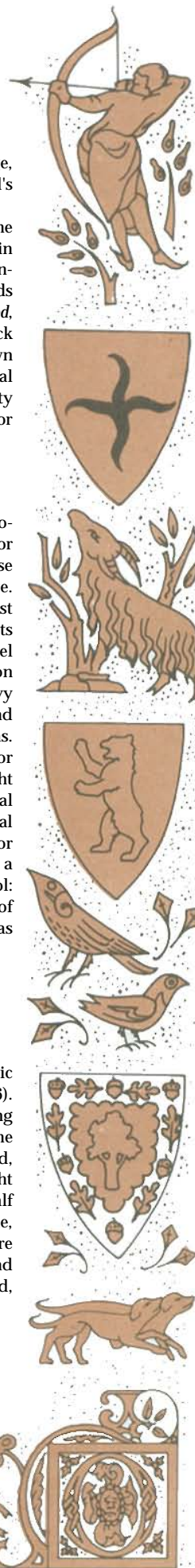
## Other Armies of Note

Church armies have been referred to briefly in the Introduction, and these men always will be armed with armor and weaponry which obeys the same restrictions as those placed upon specialist priests of the powers they serve. The armies of the Church of Hextor are by far the most important, of course. Of the many individual troop units in Aerdy, easily the most important is the army of Rel Astra, simply on account of its size. The Iron Nation knights are the elite unit of this army. They are heavy infantrymen, fighters of levels 4+, all plate-clad and unusual in that they only employ two-handed weapons. While they are not cavalry, they use heavy horse for transport and are almost always accompanied by light infantry as logistic support. These knights own magical items, and have double the usual chances for magical armor and weapons. Each also has a 75% chance for possessing a miscellaneous magical item which has a function protecting against some form of magical control: a *ring of free action*, for example. Any knight-leader of level 10+ always possesses at least one such item and has a 50% chance of possessing one other.

## Mercenaries of the Lands

### Hansamen's Charge

This is a group of 24 infantrymen, led by a charismatic 6th-level fighter, Hansamen (Str 18/44, Int 16, Cha 16). Hansamen wears *chain mail +2* and has a *shield +2* giving him AC 0. He has a simple *longsword +1*. The rest of the group is: six 3rd-level fighters (chain mail and shield, short sword or longsword, and dagger or hand axe); eight 2nd-level fighters (half with chain mail and shield, half with padded leather and shield; short sword or battle axe, dagger, and three have longbows with which they are adept—these men have Dexterity scores of 12+1d6); and nine 1st-level fighters (padded leather armor and shield, short sword, hand axe, dagger).





# Forces of the Empire

Hansamen's Charge are deserters from the Imperial Regulars. They come from the Naelax lands and deserted in a battle north of Innspa against Nyrondese and Flinty Hills forces. They were half-starved, badly treated, and they detested having to fight alongside orcs. Their morale is not good (9) because several have left families and sweethearts in the lands to which they dare not return. The group is fairly unscrupulous, but Hansamen is of LE alignment and keeps fair discipline. The Charge has survived by foraging south of Innspa and raiding in the northern Cranden lands before making its way south, seeking employment in the Darmen lands or on the borders of the western lands.

The base morale of this group could be improved to 11 if they were hired, given hot food, and handed a few silvers before seeing service. While they are no angels, they're not much worse than anyone else in Aerdy these days. Provided they can see one or more good fighters among those hiring them, they will be unlikely to desert unless they come up against highly magical monsters or fiends. This group would make a good escort, for as infantrymen they are used to long marches and don't complain overmuch. For long-distance rescue missions, this group would be valuable as logistic support, camp guards, trail-concealers (several have skills in this department), and foragers. Pay rates for this group should average 5 sp per level per day, with their employer paying for their board and quarter when appropriate, and for equipment. Hansamen would require 5 gp a day, and if asked to undertake some dangerous mission these men would ask for more.

## The Bannermen

The Bannermen are a surviving unit of the Glorioles Army, once drawn from Pontylver. Led by the 8th-level fighter Ranxxen Strangender, they are the remnants of an elite heavy cavalry unit. There are 13 in all, apart from Ranxxen; 12 fighters (two each of 6th- and 7th- level, and four each of 4th- and 5th- level) and the 8th-level mage Alavend.

Ranxxen is a fine fighter (Str 18/77, Dex 16, Con 16, with AC -2 and 96 hp). All the fighters have heavy horses, with 50% having chain barding to boot. The fighters all wear plate mail, although each has a 50% chance for damage to the armor which reduces the AC value to AC 4 base. Ranxxen has *plate mail* +2 and a *longsword* +2, +3 vs. *extraplanar creatures*. For the other fighters, use standard rules for determining magical item possession. The mage Alavend has a *wand of frost* with 37 charges remaining and a *ring of invisibility*.

The Bannermen are so named because Ranxxen owns a magical war banner, proudly displaying a red dragon with a severed head on a green background. This is a specially crafted family heirloom and can only be

employed by Ranxxen or one of his bloodline (the unit has none of his kin). All within 100' of it and allied to Ranxxen can gain from the magical effects it can create: *prayer* once a day, changing morale to Fanatic (18) once a day for 1 turn; *regeneration* (1 hp a round for one turn, useable once a week). Note, however, that the banner will enrage any dragon which sees it, so that the beast will automatically attack, gaining a +4 bonus to all hit rolls (but a +2 penalty to AC).

This group actually turned renegade and fought against imperial troops in the sack of Pontylver. Having seen what happened to that city, and their families within it, these are hollow-eyed, grim-faced, fanatical warriors now. They seek any opportunity to strike at imperial forces, and while they are not reckless they don't fear death. They have been employed by Drax as shock troops to strike against Lone Heath raiders, and to raze the keeps or settlements of those who have offended Drax or tried to resist his rule. This has been acceptable to them to date, especially since they gained the ring of invisibility in payment, but they now want more aggressive action directed more specifically against imperial targets.

Hiring the Bannermen is ideal for PCs who need to make some strike against a fortified target and to create a distraction while they strike at a secondary area. The Bannermen are all evil, of course, but most are LE (including some ardent reverers of Hextor) and they don't desert their employers if they have been fairly dealt with. They demand high payment rates; above all, they want magical items. They also want a share of booty, which varies depending on the number and levels of PCs hiring them. They don't waste their time with anything which isn't dangerous.

## The Moving Shroud

This terrifying group of psychopaths was last believed to be prowling the Naelax lands in the service of Strychan of Dustbridge. Their exact appearance and nature is uncertain, because the group is rarely seen. They are always disguised by a moving haze so that only their distorted outline is seen. These horsemen always seem to be galloping at some extraordinary speed (MV 48). They appear as heavy cavalry, with their faceless leader bearing a war banner carrying the dread symbol of Nerull, the Reaper.

The Moving Shroud is a group of bounty hunters and slaughterers. They kill for pleasure and profit, but they are no simple group of assassins, not even a high-level group. Magical effects such as *fear* radiate from and around the group, said to be some 20 strong. Undead creatures cannot be compelled to attack them and, indeed, commanded undead will often desert their controller to ally with the Moving Shroud in a battle.

This entity is greatly feared in the western lands and the Darmen lands in particular, where they were repeat-

# Forces of the Empire

edly sighted in the previous winter. Heading for Almor, it was feared that they were in Szeffrin's employ until they turned up not far from Permanence. While the huntsmen are known to track down and slay priests of good alignment and paladins in particular, for the right inducements (magical items, sacrifices to Nerull) they will contemplate any target, and they ride down anything which gets in their way. How they can be approached for hire is uncertain, but there are rumors of one or two dark-robed emissaries who visit possible employers when the time is right, and magical divinations assist in drawing the soul-dead eyes of the Shroud's leader to a patron.

## The Spiderhandlers

The Spiderhandlers are an extended group of men and women, refugees from Rinloru, who ply their trade across North Province. Once they were part of a specialist unit of the Imperial Regulars, but they consider that the fall of Rinloru has freed them from any military service. Members of the group have the tattoo of a black spider on their left hands, hence the name. There are perhaps 100 in all scattered across the Province; one group of 25 serves in Atirr, others wander. None cares much for Grenell, and they prefer to serve individual employers or the rulers of free cities.

The majority of the Spiderhandlers are related through blood or marriage, and most are Garasteth people. Among the hundred, at least six are mages and they are known to have ways of communicating with each other instantaneously across long distances. Most of the others are fighters, but a few are thieves specialized in rural or urban espionage and scouting.

The core of the Spiderhandlers, the leaders of this group, are the 13th level mage Alasuzian and his paramour, the 12th-level fighter Daraneth Ghalann. Daraneth is the wife of a Torquann princeling with lands south of Winetha, and he has placed a bounty on her head for deserting him. For this reason, Daraneth feigns being mute in public and will never reveal her name; her *ring of mind shielding* helps maintain her secret.

Alasuzian makes sure all members of the Spiderhandlers know as much as possible about prospective employers. As a group, these men and women are

gaining much information from their employers and adventures, and that information has value in certain quarters. They don't betray employers; they just know how to dispense certain hints where they will be well received.

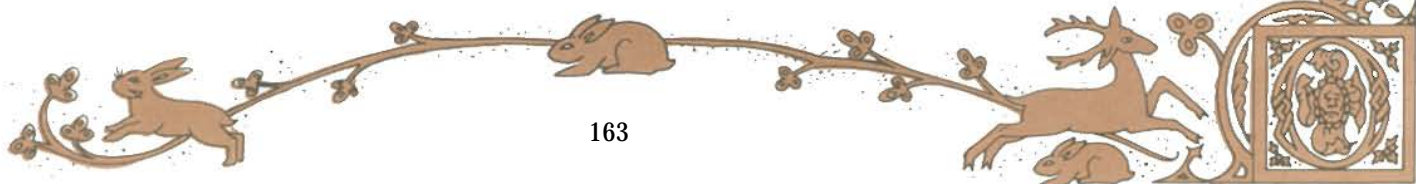
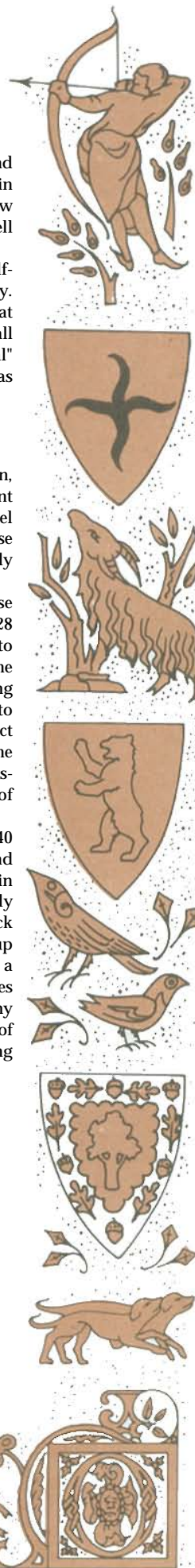
The Spiderhandlers are a group in metamorphosis, half-way between a mercenary battalion and a secret society. In a campaign, an important element of their role is that they can be hired half a dozen at a time—or as a small army in their own right. They don't undertake "political" work, such as assassinations, but they will act as bodyguards, spies, and burglars.

## Other Mercenaries of Note

The Hands of the Axe are a group of Thelwood men, driven from their forest home, seeking employment throughout Ahlissa and the southern lands. Low-level fighters for the most part, they have some reputé because of a priestess of Beory who travels with them, allegedly with superior powers of healing and curing disease.

Krakenhunter is a small galleon from Vernport whose captain, Thamassen Hariador, commands a crew of 28 including two aggressive mages. Rather than turn to piracy, or throw in his lot with the rival captains of the Sea Barons, Thamassen sails the east coast seeking employment. He's happy to sail anyone anywhere, to smuggle, run slaves or contraband, or just to protect coastlines. Currently he is defending Rel Astra until the coming Harvester. Competent and trustworthy, Thamassen knows most inlets and bays along the east coast of Aerdy from Atirr to Dullstrand.

The Marchers is the simple name taken by a force of 40 Imperial Regulars who have deserted from Rauxes and seek employ in North Province. They have identical twin priests of Hextor among them, and they are strongly Lawful in alignment, well disciplined, and they stick rigidly to the terms of agreements. Because the group possesses a *flying carpet*, and one of the priests has a *mirror of mental prowess*, they can move long distances very swiftly and are capable of strikes behind enemy lines. They demand high payment, but Strychan of Dustbridge for one has shown keen interest in employing them.





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